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ABSTRACT

This paper reports findings from a detailed critical analysis of commonly used curriculum materials and assessment devices for the study of literature in kindergarten through sixth grade. The paper provides descriptive information and suggestions for improved design and use of curricula available to classroom teachers, especially with respect to the usefulness and appropriateness of those materials for teaching literature for understanding and use of knowledge. Although descriptive information is provided about the teaching and learning of a number of approaches to literature, the focus of the paper is on information pertaining to how the teaching of the critical/aesthetic response to literature was addressed in the curriculum materials that were analyzed. The instrument appended to the paper guided this analysis and was designed to be used across subject areas. The instrument consists of three major categories of questions about the content in the literature curriculum: selection, organization and sequencing, and explication. (Author/KEH)

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Elementary Subjects Center
Series No. 30

THE ANALYSIS OF COMMONLY USED LITERATURE CURRICULUM MATERIALS

Patricia J. Cianciolo and
Mary Ellen VanCamp

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

Institute for Research on Teaching

College of Education

Michigan State University

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Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects

The **Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects** was awarded to Michigan State University in 1987 after a nationwide competition. Funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, the Elementary Subjects Center is a major project housed in the Institute for Research on Teaching (IRT). The program focuses on conceptual understanding, higher order thinking, and problem solving in elementary school teaching of mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts. Center researchers are identifying exemplary curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in the teaching of these school subjects; studying these practices to build new hypotheses about how the effectiveness of elementary schools can be improved; testing these hypotheses through school-based research; and making specific recommendations for the improvement of school policies, instructional materials, assessment procedures, and teaching practices. Research questions include, What content should be taught when teaching these subjects for understanding and use of knowledge? How do teachers concentrate their teaching to use their limited resources best? and In what ways is good teaching subject matter- specific?

The work is designed to unfold in three phases, beginning with literature review and interview studies designed to elicit and synthesize the points of view of various stakeholders (representatives of the underlying academic disciplines, intellectual leaders and organizations concerned with curriculum and instruction in school subjects, classroom teachers, state- and district-level policymakers) concerning ideal curriculum, instruction, and evaluation practices in these five content areas at the elementary level. Phase II involves interview and observation methods designed to describe current practice, and in particular, best practice as observed in the classrooms of teachers believed to be outstanding. Phase II also involves analysis of curricula (both widely used curriculum series and distinctive curricula developed with special emphasis on conceptual understanding and higher order applications), as another approach to gathering information about current practices. In Phase III, models of ideal practice will be developed, based on what has been learned and synthesized from the first two phases, and will be tested through classroom intervention studies.

The findings of Center research are published by the IRT in the Elementary Subjects Center Series. Information about the Center is included in the IRT Communication Quarterly (a newsletter for practitioners) and in lists and catalogs of IRT publications. For more information, to receive a list or catalog, or to be placed on the IRT mailing list to receive the newsletter, please write to the Editor, Institute for Research on Teaching, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

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Abstract

This paper reports findings from a detailed critical analysis of commonly used curriculum materials and assessment devices for the study of literature in the elementary grades, K-6. It provides descriptive information and suggestions for improved design and use of literature curriculum to classroom teachers, especially with respect to the usefulness and appropriateness of those materials for teaching literature for understanding and use of knowledge. Although descriptive information is provided about the teaching and learning of a number of approaches to literature, the focus of this paper is on the information pertaining to how the teaching of the critical/aesthetic response to literature was addressed in the curriculum materials that were analyzed. The instrument appended to this paper guided this analysis and was designed to be used across subject areas and consists of three major categories about the content in the literature curriculum: selection, organization and sequencing, and explication.

THE ANALYSIS OF COMMONLY USED LITERATURE CURRICULUM MATERIALS

Patricia J. Cianciolo and Mary Ellen Van Camp[1]

Objectives of the Study

The research reported in this paper was undertaken within the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects. The Center's research focus is on the teaching and learning of mathematics, science, social studies, literature, music, and the visual arts in the elementary school (Grades K-6), with emphasis on teaching and learning for understanding and knowledge use in each content area. This paper reports findings from an analysis and critique of the content of commonly used curriculum materials and assessment devices for the study of literature in the elementary grades, K-6. It provides descriptive information and suggestions for improved design and use of curricula available to classroom teachers, especially with respect to the usefulness of those materials for teaching literature for understanding and use of knowledge. Although we were interested in providing descriptive information about the teaching and learning of all approaches to literature, we were particularly interested in information pertaining to how the critical/aesthetic approach to literature was addressed in these curriculum materials.

Methodology

Selection of Materials

This report is part of a larger study (Phase II, Study 2) in which we analyzed and critiqued both typical (commonly used) and distinctive curriculum

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materials in the study of literature in the elementary grades. These materials were studied for their organization and sequencing of content, their methodology for teaching literature, and if and how the accompanying suggested activities, assignments, and discourse were designed to bring about conceptual level understanding of the critical/aesthetic study of literature. It was hoped that contrasts and similarities of these types of curriculum materials would help us to define strengths and limitations of ways to organize the literature curriculum and select various activities and assignments used to help students to understand and learn to respond critically/aesthetically to literature.

Analysis of Curricular Materials

Development of Analysis Instrument

The research team developed a common set of framing questions organized around eight categories that provided a structure for researchers to follow in their critiques (see Appendix). This set of framing questions was also used to facilitate comparison and contrast of the common dimensions across the subject areas. The first category, goals, includes questions about the series as a whole and pertains to descriptive information and evaluative judgments about the nature of the goals, their clarity, and the interrelationship among different kinds of goals. Three categories about subject matter content were included in the instrument, namely selection, organization and sequencing, and explication. Key questions relating to these aspects of subject matter content were applied to the series as a whole as well as to more detailed analysis of smaller pieces of the series (materials at the second- and fifth-grade levels). The second- and fifth-grade levels were chosen to correspond with those chosen for two other of the Center's studies: In one study, called Case Studies of Exemplary Practices, this researcher conducted case studies of one second-grade

teacher, one fifth-grade teacher, and the school librarian over one academic year (1989-1990). In another study, called the Ideal Curriculum Study, three university professors and three elementary school teachers (all of whom were considered by their colleagues to be experts in the teaching and learning of children's literature in the elementary grades) were asked to identify what they considered to be key features (understandings or generalizations) of the ideal children's literature curriculum (program) in the elementary grades; they were also asked to select one of the key features they listed and explain in detail how they would propose to develop it at the Grade 2 and Grade 5 levels.

To determine how the curriculum materials facilitated interactive aspects of learning, we included questions which focused on the nature of the Teacher-Student Relationships and Classroom Discourse, Classroom Activities and Assignments, and Assessment and Evaluation Procedures. To determine the amount and nature of support that the materials provided to the teacher for becoming familiar with and implementing the curriculum, we included questions for an eighth category, Directions to the Teacher. The questions in the latter four categories were applied to commonly used materials at the Grade 2 and Grade 5 levels.

Since the analysis was primarily qualitative, researchers used the framing questions to guide their inquiry as they worked between the study of the materials on a general level across all the grades and the study of particular units of instruction within grade levels. This included, for example, considering questions about specifics such as activities and assignments in light of questions about the series' stated goals or questions about the content selection and organization in the series. Researchers also worked back and forth, across and within particular categories of questions to consider the interaction between the subject matter content and the suggested questions

about teacher-student relationships and classroom discourse, activities and assignments, assessment and evaluation. To develop defensible answers to the framing questions, general impressions were recorded, particular examples were noted, inconsistent cases that might dispute generalizations were sought, and generalizations were modified as evidence was more closely studied and evaluated.

Selecting a Commonly Used Literature Textbook Series

There are a small number of literature programs with a planned scope and sequence for the study of literature for the elementary grades, K-6 or 1-6. To our knowledge, none of the literature programs is based on the use of separate editions of children's literature trade books for each student in each grade. Instead, it appears that all of the children's literature programs are made up of anthologized textbooks, consisting of portions or complete literary selections. These selections are studied in the original version or a version adapted to suit a particular rationale for sequencing such elements as readability levels, literary concepts, themes, or genres. Also, all of these literature programs tend to implement in some way and to some extent aspects of the whole-language approach in the study of literature.

None of these literature programs seem to have the widespread adoption as does a reading series or a science or mathematics textbook program. One explanation for this is that most of the people responsible for implementing the elementary school curriculum tend to believe that the study of literature is addressed in the reading programs, and since they consider their reading programs well in place, they are less likely to see the need to adopt a textbook series for a literature program. Also, all of the literature textbook programs, except one, are in their first edition and were published too recently

to enjoy widespread adoption. Therefore, we decided to analyze the one program that was in its second edition, namely Odyssey: An HBJ Literature Program (Sebesta & Simons, 1986). Apparently, enough schools used this program in its first edition to convince the publishers that they were justified in making the financial commitment needed to publish it in its second edition. Each grade level in the series has its own title. In this paper we refer to The Heart of the Woods for Grade 2, Across Wide Fields for Grade 4, and East of the Sun for Grade 5.

Goals

The Odyssey literature program is based on selective, clear, and specific goals. The overarching objective or purpose of the entire elementary program, Grades (levels) 1 to 6, is stated by the textbook editors in each of the teacher's editions as follows:

> ODYSSEY is a carefully planned program designed to provide children with basic literary education. The program's selections and instructional material are all aimed toward its main objective: to provide a solid foundation of literary experiences on which students may build a lifetime of reading pleasure. (East of the Sun, p. T12)

To achieve this objective, the editors have identified 14 goals for the Odyssey program:

> (#1) To offer students a wide variety of pleasurable, independent reading of the highest literary quality.
> (#2) To demonstrate the value of literature and to foster interest in reading.
> (#3) To increase understanding of literature's relationship to human experience.
> (#4) To develop insights into personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
> (#5) To promote recognition of the individual's role in the community and society.
> (#6) To develop an awareness of other people and cultures and their contributions to American life and culture as well as to world civilization.
> (#7) To gain an appreciation for the literary heritage that is a legacy from one generation to another.
> (#8) To develop an awareness of the meanings and nuances of words.

(#9) To show the power and possibilities of language as a tool for self-expression and to develop an awareness of the persuasive power of words.
(#10) To develop an understanding of literary forms, techniques, and styles.
(#11) To demonstrate the unique artistry of individual authors and illustrators.
(#12) To encourage thoughtful and critical responses to literature and to develop respect for the responses of others.
(#13) To develop the skills of reading comprehension, writing, and the other language arts, as well as logical thinking skills.
(#14) To develop an awareness of the relationship between literature and other subject areas. (East of the Sun, pp. T12-13)

Sam Sebesta, the main author of this literature program, is a well known teacher educator who coauthored Literature for Thursday's Child (Sebesta, & Iverson, 1980), a textbook for an undergraduate-level university children's literature course. The statement of goals for this literature program is quite consistent with those that authors of textbooks for university level children's literature courses have recommended for literature programs in the elementary grades (Cullinan, 1989; Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987; Norton, 1987). Other professionals in this field might wish to modify the list, perhaps by designating some of these goals as outcomes or program descriptions. For example, they might designate the following statements from the Odyssey program as outcomes rather than goals.

(#3) To increase understanding of literature's relationship to human experience.
(#6) To develop an awareness of other people and cultures and their contributions to American life and culture as well as to world civilization.
(#7) To gain an appreciation for the literary heritage that is a legacy from one generation to another.
(#12) To encourage thoughtful and critical responses to literature and to develop respect for the responses of others.
(#13) To develop the skills of reading comprehension, writing, and the other language arts, as well as logical thinking skills.
(#14) To develop an awareness of the relationship between literature and other subject areas.

Some other professionals in this field might consider the following statements from the Odyssey program as descriptions of the program rather than as goals.

(#1) To offer students a wide variety of pleasurable, independent reading of the highest literary quality.
(#2) To demonstrate the value of literature and to foster interest in reading.
(#9) To show the power and possibilities of language as a tool for self-expression and to develop an awareness of the persuasive power of words.
(#11) To demonstrate the unique artistry of individual authors and illustrators.

It seems to us that at least three important goals are omitted in this literature program. One, the series authors might well have included a goal concerning the development of children's creative and imaginative thinking. Another goal might have focused on teaching children to evaluate literature by using specific criteria or characteristics, so as to differentiate between high quality and lesser (moderate and low) quality literature. Finally, they might have included a goal which alerts the students to the fact that literature is an art.

Some of the Odyssey goals focus on fostering conceptual understanding and application of higher order thinking to aspects of the content:

(#2) To demonstrate the value of literature and to foster interest in reading.
(#3) To increase understanding of literature's relationship to human experience.
(#4) To develop insights into personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
(#12) To encourage thoughtful and critical responses to literature and to develop respect for the responses of others.

It is possible that the authors of this literature program viewed their list of goals as the key ideas around which they structured the learning networks of knowledge to be learned, for to some extent the facts and concepts about literature which they attempt to teach do reflect the ideas implied in these goals. But the proliferation of goals identified and their very specificity suggest that the attainment of knowledge does not imply learning networks of knowledge structured around key ideas per se. Instead, the selections

are organized around themes and kinds of literature, and the program focuses on the learning of facts, concepts, and attitudes about literature. It would have been advantageous to structure networks of knowledge about literature around a few key ideas, such as,

> Literature is an art and should be considered an allusion to reality rather than a mirror reflection or a miniature image of reality
>
> Literature is a humanity and thus may provide continuity with the human experience, enabling one to gain knowledge and insights about oneself, others and one's world
>
> Literature may serve as a means to satisfy personal interests and needs
>
> Specific elements and characteristics can be identified for literature in general and for each kind (genre) of literature
>
> Literature should be valued and enjoyed for its own sake, that is, for the aesthetic experience it offers the reader

Organizing the content of the literature program around a limited number of basic understandings and principles rooted in literature as a subject discipline, such as the major ideas listed above, tends to empower students with meaningfully understood, integrated, and applicable learning that can be accessed and used when relevant in a broad range of situations in and out of school. In addition, organizing the content around the key ideas tends to imply that the program will more likely do the following:

> Balance breadth with depth by developing the limited content sufficiently to ensure conceptual understanding;
>
> Emphasize the relationships between powerful ideas, both by contrasting along common dimensions and integrating across dimensions, so as to produce knowledge structures that are differentiated yet cohesive;
>
> Provide students not only with instructions, but also with opportunities to actively process information and construct meaning fostering problem solving and other higher order thinking skills in the context of knowledge application; thus, the focus is less on thinking processes per se, and more on how to make use of previously acquired knowledge in new contexts.

The knowledge goals in the Odyssey literature program do not address the strategic and metacognitive aspects of processing the knowledge for meaning,

organizing it for remembering, or accessing it for application. Two program goals relate to teaching children to think, but nothing pertaining to the strategic or metacognitive aspects of the processes is involved:

> (#12) To encourage thoughtful and critical responses to literature and to develop respect for the responses of others.
> (#13) To develop the skills of reading comprehension, writing, and the other language arts, as well as logical thinking skills.

These goals aim at logical and critical thinking, but say nothing about an awareness of or ability to consider or understand one's own thinking processes.

The Odyssey program includes two goals that relate to attitude and dispositional responses to literature:

> (#1) To offer students a wide variety of pleasurable, independent reading of the highest literary quality.
> (#2) To demonstrate the value of literature and to foster interest in reading.

These goals seem to be descriptive of the program rather than of knowledge goals; therefore, the knowledge base which the students need to accomplish these goals can only be inferred. It appears that the goal which focuses on offering students a wide variety of pleasurable, independent reading of the highest literary quality suggests that all of the literature included in the Odyssey texts is literature "of the highest literary quality" and that the students will find that all of these selections offer them or at least will eventually lead them to "pleasurable, independent reading." Some teachers, some students, and certainly the researchers of this study might well take issue with this assumption. Without doubt, there are some quality literature selections included throughout the series, but some of the selections are of questionable literary quality.

For example, the factual article entitled "The Amazing Ben Franklin" (East of the Sun, pp. 94-98) amounts to little more than a litany of Franklin's bright ideas and inventions: subscription book service (a forerunner to

libraries as we now know them), "matching funds" as a means to raise money, "daylight savings time," the lightning rod, the electric generator and a battery that stored electricity, the Franklin stove, and bifocals. All of these facts add to the store of interesting bits of trivia, but they give the reader little actual insight into the personality of the man or knowledge about what led him to these ideas or inventions, which a more literary biographical sketch might have accomplished. One can see the rationale for including the folk tale "The Shoemaker and the Elves" (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 274-282) in the unit "We Could be Friends." One is hard put, however, to justify including the inane factual piece entitled "The Sneaker Factory," in this unit and placing it immediately after this well-known folk tale. Not only is it a vacuous bit of factual writing about how these sport shoes are made, but its presence at this point in the textbook actually distorts and distracts from the theme of the folk tale, if indeed "friendship" is the theme or message of "The Shoemaker and the Elves."

Implied in these two goals about attitude and dispositional response to literature are the assumptions that by reading and studying the literature included in this program, the students will automatically arrive at the conclusions that

Reading is pleasurable
Independent reading is valued
High-quality literature is to be preferred

None of these attitudinal responses to literature are easily accomplished nor can be taken lightly. They are goals that must be addressed as conscientiously and directly as any of the knowledge-based goals.

Other implications of these two goals should be addressed at this point. First, because literature is an art, response to it tends to be largely subjective. This is especially true in the case of children who know little

about literature as a subject discipline and have not yet had a wealth of experiences with a wide variety of literary genres or reading and evaluating literature of varying quality. To find a particular literary selection pleasurable, let alone to prefer, recognize, and appreciate literature that is aesthetically beautiful and thus to identify it as "quality literature," are not responses that the literature teacher or librarian can ever guarantee. Even with vast and varied experiences with children, knowledge about the nature of response to literature, and familiarity with a wealth of children's literature, one can never really predict how children will respond to a particular literary selection. All one can do is to make a calculated guess about one child's or most children's responses to a particular literary selection.

This kind of knowledge and experience offers some degree of insight about children's responses to literature, but such factors as the very essence of human nature and the amount and kinds of experiences one has had with literature tend to negate predictable responses to literature. So, one student might respond favorably to a selection and find that it offers a pleasurable experience, but another might find that same selection boring or not at all satisfying. One might also mention that nowhere in this program are children taught how to differentiate levels of quality from one selection to another. Nor are there attempts to teach them how to differentiate between high-quality literature and literature of average or low quality.

Cooperative learning is not a featured goal in this literature program. One goal does seem closely related to cooperative learning, but that relationship is dependent on how the teachers implement the relevant activities:

> (#12) To encourage thoughtful and critical responses to literature and to develop respect for the responses of others.

Some of the activities included in the curriculum could involve cooperative learning, but that would depend upon the teacher's decisions about how to implement the discourse in the activities they require or offer as options to the students. It also would depend on the teacher's knowledge about cooperative learning and how to carry it out in the classroom.

As a set, the goals seem appropriate to students' learning needs, if one defines "learning needs" in terms of what children need to learn in order to realize the stated program goals during the course of their study of literature. The term "learning needs" might be related to what literature is developmentally appropriate for children at various grade levels.

It is more educationally sound and more in keeping with findings of research in child development and response to literature to think in terms of what is developmentally appropriate for children at the various age ranges rather than at grade levels, because the arbitrary achievement designators that one traditionally associates with grade levels, especially reading achievement, seldom have an impact on reading interests and needs. Since grade levels are the designated levels in the Odyssey literature program, we will have to adhere to them. It is a truism that at any one grade level students will need a range of literature to meet various learning needs. Each child, in fact, needs a range of literature (from easy to difficult and on a variety of topics and themes) to meet his or her learning needs and related individual reading interests. The authors of the Odyssey literature program accommodate this fact quite appropriately, for they designate specifically in the teaching plans whether or not the selections and the activities are easy, challenging, or at the designated grade level. Also, they offer bibliographies of other literary selections for the students who are especially interested in reading more on comparable themes, topics, or genre.

If the term "learning needs" is to be interpreted to mean that the authors of the programs have identified goals that are developmentally appropriate for children in the elementary school in general and at the various grade levels in particular, we can say that these authors have done that effectively. Their goals are quite consistent with the goals found in at least two of the most commonly used university-level children's literature textbooks. For example, Norton (1987) said, "A literature program should acquaint children with their literary heritage" (p. 84). This item correlates with Odyssey goal #7 ("To gain an appreciation for the literary heritage that is a legacy from one generation to another"). Norton also said, "A literature program should help students understand the formal elements of literature and lead them to prefer the best our literature has to offer" (p. 84), which correlates with Odyssey goal #10 ("To develop an understanding of literary forms, techniques, and styles").

Three Odyssey program goals relate to Norton's goal statement: "A literature program should help children grow up understanding themselves and the rest of humanity" (p. 84):

> (#4) To develop insights into personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences.
> (#5) To promote recognition of the individual's role in the community and society.
> (#6) To develop an awareness of other people and cultures and their contributions to American life and culture as well to world civilization.

Two Odyssey program goals are reflected in Norton's statement, "A literature program should help children evaluate what they read, extending both their appreciation of literature and their imagination" (p. 85):

> (#12) To encourage thoughtful and critical responses to literature and to develop respect for the responses of others.
> (#13) To develop the skills of reading comprehension, writing, and the other language arts, as well as logical thinking skills.

It is interesting to note that none of the Odyssey program goals mention the term "imagination." It seems to be an especially significant omission. Although no goal focuses specifically on developing children's imaginative thinking powers via literature, there are some activities recommended in the teaching plans which encourage (if not require) creative and imaginative thinking.

The authors of the Odyssey literature program have brought a rather unusual interpretation to goal #14 ("To develop an awareness of the relationship between literature and other subjects"). In each unit there is a section entitled "Connections," and usually in each of these sections there are several essays intended to teach about other subject areas. Clearly, including these articles is the authors' attempt to relate or integrate literature with other areas of the curriculum, such as science, mathematics, social studies, or health. But one would be hard put to call these selections "literature," for they are not written well enough to be called literary essays and none of them are excerpts or complete pieces of writing from previously published concept or informational books. In actuality, the selections in the "Connections" are factual articles that very literally connect with some aspect of the content, topic, or even just the title of a literary selection included in that particular unit. Seldom is there anything substantive about the factual and/or conceptual informational material or the theme of a literary selection which one can link with another curricular area as a result of reading these selections. The subject matter focus of each article is evident in its title. Some examples of the topics addressed in the "Connections" are listed below.

"Riding on Two Wheels" (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 40-47).
"Shadows" (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 86-89).
"A Sneaker Factory" (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 284-291).
"World of Winds" (East of the Sun, pp. 368-375).

"The Railroad Crosses America" (East of the Sun, pp. 460-463).
"Can You Believe Your Eyes?" (East of the Sun, pp. 76-83).
"The Amazing Ben Franklin" (East of the Sun, pp. 694-99).

The two examples which follow might serve to demonstrate this obvious flaw in the authors' attempt at matching a stated goal with aspects of the curriculum. For the selection entitled "Emergency in Space" (East of the Sun, pp. 244-256), an excerpt from the science fantasy novel Farmer in the Sky by Robert A Heinlein recounts the ingenious and heroic efforts of a young boy to save himself and his bunkmates when the floor of their spaceship cabin is punctured by a meteorite while they are on their way to one of Jupiter's moons. The "Connection" selection entitled "Voyages to the Planets" (East of the Sun, pp. 258-264) is a factual article about the space probes of Voyager 1 and 2 and the planets visited by each; the teachers are instructed to tell the students to study the illustrations as they read, noting the relative sizes and positions of the planets in the solar system. No attempt is made to make any direct comparisons of the scientific aspects of these two selections, or even to determine which aspects of Heinlein's story are realistic, possible, or probable were the technology available, and which aspects are mere fantasy.

Following "East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon" (East of the Sun, pp. 352-366), a Norwegian folk tale about how a faithful young woman is reunited with her prince when the north wind carries her to a distant land and the sunlight destroys the wicked troll he was forced to marry, there is a factual article entitled "Winds," where the causes for winds are described, Earth's prevailing winds, local winds, destroying and helping winds. It is unfortunate that attempts to relate or integrate literature are approached in this manner. One need only look into these or any of the other fine literary selections included throughout the series, and one could easily see how the authors used subject matter content to create their stories. There was very little need to

include the poorly written factual articles which are included in the "Connections" component of the units to accomplish the program goal of developing an awareness of the relationship between literature and other subject areas.

One might identify two fine literary selections which might have been used to better advantage to integrate or correlate with other subject disciplines. Incorporated in The Heart of the Woods (pp. 112-128), is Max, the picture book by Rachel Isadora. This convincing here-and-now (modern realistic fiction) story about a young baseball player who discovers that he likes ballet dancing and decides that it is a fine way to warm up for baseball could easily be integrated, or at least connected with the study of ballet as one of the fine arts, or with baseball, one of the most popular of American sports. Isadora's humorous black-and-white sketches which accompany this selection show the exuberant protagonist in his baseball uniform stretching at the barre and trying to do the split; he accomplishes a high leap to the door and runs down to the park to hit a home run. When one considers the questions and activity for students following this story, it becomes immediately apparent that the actual essence of baseball as a major sport and ballet as one of the fine arts were barely touched upon, and the authenticity of the information about ballet and baseball inherent in the illustrations, even though they are stylized, is totally ignored. In addition, it becomes most obvious that not only was this story not used to advantage as a means for realizing the goal of integrating literature with other subjects, but the questions and activity called for very little, if any higher order thinking.

What did Max find out about dancing?

What exciting thing did Max do in the baseball game?

Tell what Max does on Saturdays now.

Someone says, "Baseball players don't dance." What does Max say?

A riddle for you: How is a dancer like a baseball player?

a. Both keep score.
b. Both must warm up.
c. Both tell stories.

Which three words in the story tell how dancers move? (The Heart of the Woods, p. 129)

The activity follows: "Max learned to do something new. He learned to dance. What new thing would you like to learn to do? Tell or write how you would learn to do it. Tell or write who might teach you" (p. 129).

Another example of a fine literary selection which might have been used to better advantage to integrate or correlate with other subject disciplines is the classic poem by Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benet, "Wilbur Wright and Orville Wright" (East of the Sun, pp. 518-519). There are no questions or recommended activities for this poem in the students' edition, but the teachers' edition recommends that the poem be offered to attain three objectives: to enjoy a narrative poem, to distinguish fact from fiction, and to describe a significant historical event in the history of the United States (p. T240).

We might consider some of the suggestions offered to teachers to accomplish these objectives, especially the latter. To introduce the poem, it was suggested that the teachers "ask the students what kind of person they think of when they think of an inventor." The possible student responses which they might expect were: "someone smart, someone who is always 'tinkering'; someone slightly odd." It was suggested that the teachers then ask the students to describe the kind of person they thought invented the airplane. The possible response they could expect was "a dreamer; someone with his or her head in the clouds" (p. T240).

To set the purpose for reading this poem, the teachers are told to tell the students that this poem gives a fanciful description of the actual event

and, therefore, they should advise them to notice, as they read it, which elements are facts and which are make-believe. It was also suggested that they ask the students to identify what they "can learn from the poem about the invention of the airplane." The postreading questions asked the students to identify (1) the true historical events in the poem "Wilbur Wright and Orville Wright" as well as (2) those things which the poets added to make the poem interesting (p. T240). The answer provided to the first question was that the Wright brothers ran a bicycle shop, made gliders, then made an airplane, which Orville flew at Kitty Hawk. The possible responses to the second question were that the poets created the dialogue between the brothers, the brothers buying soda pop, and the general impression given of the Wright brothers as characters or eccentrics (p. T240).

The teachers were advised to discuss the poem further, by asking the students (1) why they thought the airplane was considered such an important invention and (2) how it affected life in America. The possible responses to the first question were that it fulfills the ancient human dream of flying and that the speed of air travel connects distant places closely. The possible responses to the second question were that people traveled more often and they traveled longer distances; people were more willing to move great distances away from family and friends because they knew that they could "go home for the holidays" more easily. Extending activities, designated according to difficulty, consisted of the following: Make up descriptive names for 10 familiar inventions such as a toaster, iron, television (Easy); List and discuss 10 of the most important inventions in world (Average); and research and report on unsuccessful flying machines (Challenging) (East of the Sun, p. T241).

The Wright poem was included in a unit entitled "America Grows Up." The selection entitled "Many Faces of America" (pp. 540-541), presented in the

"Connections" section of this unit, consists of biographical sketches (five or six lines long) of people who made significant contributions to American life and history and whose ancestors came from various parts of the world. In one activity, the students are asked to choose one of the persons described in "Connections," use books in the library to find out more about that person and his/her accomplishments, then share this added information with their peers. In another activity, the students are urged to use library books to prepare notes to use in "a written oral report" about two famous Americans who were immigrants from other countries or ethnic groups and helped to make America great (p. 543). It should be noted that no reference was made to the Wright brothers in the "Connections" section of this unit! But more important is the fact that the questions and the activities provided did not reflect the potential wealth and depth of knowledge and insight about aspects of science, social studies (history) and literature (poetry and literary biographies) which could have been focused on so easily.

It seems all too apparent that lower level thinking is all that is evoked by the questions and activities posed in conjunction with the story and poem discussed above. The mundane questions focus on facts as well as literal and interpretive thinking, and they solicit primarily details contained in the selections or conjectured motivational or cause-and-effect relationships. It is particularly distressing, since this is a literature program, that so little attempt was made to help the students recognize and evaluate how the authors of the literary selections made (or did not make) valid use of subject matter (content) to develop the literary elements of the genres they chose to write in (i.e., such elements as characterization, setting, theme, mood, plot, illustrations for the picture storybook and figurative language, rhyme, rhythm, "crystallized experience" or sparse use of words, and the sound/feel of the

words for the poem). The point here is not that the questions posed by the authors of this literature program are so poor, but that they offer so little opportunity to stretch or challenge elementary school aged children's actual and potential capabilities to engage in higher kinds of thinking and to learn to respond critically/aesthetically to literature.

Content Selection

Given the goals of the program, the selection of the content seems coherent and appropriate except for carrying out two goals. More specifically, the lack of appropriateness lies with the interpretation of goal #7 ("to gain an appreciation for the literary heritage that is a legacy from one generation to another"), and goal #14 ("to develop an awareness of the relationship between literature and other subject areas").

There is confusion throughout the program regarding the interpretation of the goals pertaining to "literary heritage." The problem is that the program gives two meanings to this goal, especially the term heritage. One meaning is that it pertains to classics and the folk or traditional literature; the other is that the term applies to the historical events of the country in which one resides. Most literature scholars would imply the former interpretation rather than the latter when they refer to "literary heritage." In fact, the authors of this paper could find no other source in which the latter interpretation was used.

To transmit the correct interpretation of this goal, we believe that the authors should have communicated the following interpretations about our literary heritage. The classic, whose author is known, is a literary selection that has been established as a tradition by many people talking about it favorably over at least three generations. Thus, it has proved popular with the reading

public or at least has been acknowledged by critics over several generations as being of significant and exemplary literary quality. Folk or traditional literature is an anonymous archetypal literary creation. Typically this literature, be it nursery rhyme, verse, old tale, myth, legend, hero tale, epic, fable, and so forth, was meant for people of all ages within a particular social or cultural group and was transmitted orally over numerous generations. Fortunately, there are numerous classics from English-speaking countries and folk or traditional tales originating among diverse cultures in countries all over the world included throughout this series.

A number of lessons on the characteristics of folk literature as a specific literary genre has been included throughout this program, but no mention is made about how a literary selection becomes a classic or what the characteristics of a classic are. The fact that classics are a part of one's social or cultural heritage is virtually ignored. Appreciation for and understanding of the implications of the legacy inherent in a literary heritage would occur only through a significant intellectual leap on the part of the teacher and certainly on the part of the students.

To demonstrate the treatment typically given to a classic we might consider how the excerpt from The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, by C. S. Lewis was handled (East of the Sun, pp. T164-T167). The major objective of this lesson was to explain the popularity of a literary work, not to identify it as a classic or to highlight specific qualities that evidenced literary excellence. The students are told that the book from which this excerpt was taken was an award winner. The teaching plan indicates that this book was named a Notable Children's Book in 1950 by the American Library Association, but offers no suggestions about what to do with this information. It is suggested that the teachers point out that this book has been extremely popular

ever since it was published in the 1950s and that they ask the students to state why they think this book and the other Narnia books have been popular for so long.

Some of the possible responses the children might make to this question are provided. Those point to some of the fine qualities of Lewis's writing: The story creates a whole new world that seems real and that does not depend on the similarity to the real world for its appeal; the story makes the reader want to know what will happen; the descriptions of the places make a strong impression on the reader; the reader likes and cares about what happens to the central characters. One gets the impression that anything the children liked about the story would be accepted. By inference, one could conclude that because a book is popular, it is also of excellent literary quality. Again, the authors reinforce the assumption that popularity should be equated with literary excellence.

The nature of literature as a discipline communicated in this program is that it is a tool for learning, that it is a valid source for acquiring social and moral values (specifically Judeo-Christian and democratic values and mores), and that it is a vehicle for self understanding. Despite the litany of program goals throughout the various components of this series (Introduction to Odyssey and the teaching plans for each literary selection in the teachers' editions of the textbooks and the worksheets), one finds that the major purpose of the activities and the thrust of the questions and assignments offered in connection with them seem to be on developing literacy skills rather than on studying literature. The focus is on fostering the development of reading skills (especially vocabulary and comprehension skills) and written discourse skills; some attention is given to oral discourse competencies through such activities as dramatization and discussion. Although attention is given to the

elements of fiction (i.e., characterization, setting, theme, plot, style, and perhaps mood), this is done in the context of facilitating comprehension rather than developing understanding, evaluation, and appreciation of the role these elements play in the development of the aesthetic or artistic qualities of a literary selection. Thus, the study of literature as an art and the development of critical/aesthetic response to literature are thwarted.

The literature program presents a variety of genres and types of literature, and except for the essays included in the "Connections" sections, they are examples of quality literature. The literary selections, without their accompanying illustrations, are presented just as they were originally; that is, whether they are excerpts from larger literary selections or entire selections, they are seldom abridged, rewritten, or altered in any other way. There is fictional material, poetry, drama, and informational material. All of the genres of children's literature appear to be included (fantasy, historical fiction, contemporary realistic fiction, etc.). This is fine, since the nature and substance of literature as a subject discipline is well represented. There are, however, some serious concerns with regard to how the content has been organized. The categories around which the selections are organized tend to focus on the contents (information or facts) in each story rather than on themes or on genre. Because this organizational pattern tends to ignore the aesthetic elements which literature is composed of, the fact that literature is an art is negated. This issue will be covered in more detail under the section entitled "Content Organization and Sequencing."

By its very nature, the domain of literature pertains to the realm of all aspects of the human experience. Obviously, there will be some aspects of the human experience authors of a textbook series will choose to exclude, if only to seek wide acceptance and thus adoption of their series among conservative

and liberal communities alike. Also, it is far more difficult to choose "acceptable" topics for children to read when selecting literature to be included in a literature textbook series than it is to choose selections for an individual child's personal library or family library. For example, one might well justify the purchase of picture books and juvenile novels about child molesting, such as Chilly Stomach, a picture book written by Jeannette Caines and illustrated by Pat Cummings (New York: Harper, 1988) and Foster Child, a modern realistic novel by Marion Dane Bauer (New York: Clarion, 1977) for a child's personal library or for a school or public library. It seems quite unlikely that one would choose to include these selections or excerpts from them in a literature textbook series, in spite of the fact they are very fine books and probably would prove helpful and interesting to many children. Likewise, one will find any number of excellent children's literature selections about children's response to separation from a parent due to death or divorce, such as Mama Is Going to Buy You a Mockingbird, an award winning realistic fiction novel by Jean Little (New York: Viking, 1984) which depicts an 11-year-old boy's response to his father's lingering illness and subsequent death and Dear Mr. Henshaw, in which Newbery award winner Beverly Cleary (New York: Harper, 1984) made use of a series of letters to show how much a child of divorce misses his truck-driver father.

There are several reasons one is not likely to choose stories such as these or excerpts from them in a literature textbooks series. First, they focus on very sensitive, emotionally laden aspects of the human experience which usually need to be addressed with a child in a one-to-one manner. Furthermore, some parents and educators question whether topics such as these are better or more properly dealt with by someone other than a teacher or by an agency other than the school. Also, any number of adults believe that children

should be protected from these harsh realities of life whenever and however possible. Finally, librarians and educators, as well as some publishers of children's books traditionally have considered these topics taboo for children's reading fare. Even though this tradition may be unworthy of being retained it is often very difficult for some people to disregard it. Nonetheless, throughout this program there are any number of stories that pertain to relevant and timely aspects of the children's concerns, and students are often asked to make connections between what happened to the book characters and happenings in their own lives. Attempts are made throughout the program to help the students see life applications in all of the literary genres, not just the here-and-now stories or modern realistic fiction.

The teachers are encouraged to ask questions which help the children relate their own experiences and thoughts and feelings in response to those of the book characters. In an attempt to help the students relate to the feelings of the characters in the animal fantasy "The Garden," an excerpt from the 1973 Newbery Honor book Frog and Toad, second-grade students are asked how they feel when they want something to happen right away and why things seem to take longer to happen when they want them to happen very badly (The Heart of the Woods, p. T104). Identification of the readers' experiences to those of the subjects in the poem "We Could Be Friends" by Myra Cohn Livingston, is encouraged by having the teacher ask the students to tell their classmates what they and their friends like to do together. Likewise, to encourage the students to relate their experiences with those of the characters in "Something for Davy," the excerpt from the biographical fiction novel entitled Thank You, Jackie Robinson by Barbara Cohen, fifth-grade students are told that a "bit character" is a character who has a small part in a television play or a movie. They are then asked to write a description of bit players in their own lives. They are

directed to provide details describing the person's actions, appearance, and speech (East of the Sun, p. 177).

The prior knowledge which the Odyssey literature program seems to assume that elementary students have about children's literature is reflected in Sam Sebesta's article "Teaching Literature in the Classroom," which is included in the Introduction and appears in the teachers' edition of each textbook in this literature program:

> Many children come to school with a developing interest in literature in their preschool years. They have become acquainted with literature in one form or another. They have responded, for instance, to the rhythms, rhymes, and repetitions of verses and songs. They have experienced the pleasure of looking at and listening to stories in books. They have followed the chain of events around a central idea or theme that forms a story.
>
> Children's school experience with literature, then, is an extension of this developing interest from early childhood; thus the goal of a school literature program should be to increase enjoyment and understanding--to broaden and deepen literature experience. (East of the Sun, p. T30)

It it true that many children do come to school with this kind of experience and knowledge about literature. Thus the authors of this program are quite justified in declaring that the children's school experience with literature is an extension of what they learned before entering the elementary school. It would follow then that the task of the school is to build upon and increase this experience and knowledge. One might ask the authors of the Odyssey literature program, What about the many children who were not fortunate enough to have the nursery rhymes or stories told to them or read to them during their preschool years? In all probability, they will appear to be disinterested in literature because they come to school quite lacking in experiences with and knowledge about literature. Most assuredly, it would be educationally unsound for teachers of children lacking in experiences with literature to implement a literature program like Odyssey which so obviously

ignores their needs. It should be assumed that it is the major responsibility of the teachers of children who come to school without satisfying experiences with literature to initiate the development of their interest in literature, to help them realize that literature provides pleasurable experiences and that there is a predictable schema (structural pattern) for most of the stories and poems one is told or read.

The authors of this literature program are inclined to assume that the material covered in the textbook of the previous grade level in the series will be retained by the students in the next level. For example, fantasy literature is studied in Grades 4 and 5. In the glossary at the end of Across Wide Fields, the textbook for Grade 4, a definition of fantasy as a genre is given ("a fiction story with fanciful characters and plots," p. 424), and given this very superficial definition of the genre, it is addressed quite adequately throughout that unit in both the teachers' and the students' editions. There is no definition of fantasy in the sections identified as "Literary Terms" or "Glossary" of East of the Sun, the textbook for Grade 5, nor does the term seem to be adequately defined in the fantasy unit in either the teachers' or the students' editions.

Students' reading interests and achievement levels seem to be one of the major concerns of the editors throughout the preparation of this program, often neglecting the importance of the nature of the literature as a discipline or the unit topic. Except for the donnish and dull informational articles which typify the selections in "Connections" throughout the series and perhaps the plethora of folk tales, the selections chosen for each grade level seem to reflect those children tend to favor and comprise their all-time favorites. Also, activities for extending each story allegedly vary in terms of difficulty (easy, average, and challenging) and additional children's books are always

listed at the end of each teaching plan. This encourages the teachers to recommend another book to those students who especially like a story focused on in a lesson or are particularly interested in a topic related to it.

There are some selections which pertain to aspects of human diversity such as culture, gender, race, ethnicity, handicaps, and so forth and demonstrate the salient shared experiences of people from a particular group (how persons from one particular diverse group differ from those in other groups) as well as the universal experiences of people (how these persons are quite like others) regardless of the group with which they are associated. Thus it appears that calculated attempts were made by the authors of this program to provide the students with literature that could help them to understand and appreciate the heritage and needs of themselves and others better.

The next few examples might serve to demonstrate the kind of attention to human diversity which is given not only at the Grade 5 level, but throughout this program: "An Allergy Is a Bothersome Thing" (East of the Sun, pp. 180-197), an excerpt from the 1975 Newbery Award Honor book Philip Hall Likes Me, I Reckon Maybe written by Bette Greene and illustrated by Diane de Groat, which artfully depicts a Black child's responses to an allergy to dogs and her delight with her new baby brother. In "The Worst Morning" (East of the Sun, pp. 198-211), from the novel . . . And Now Miguel by Joseph Krumgold, a 12-year-old Hispanic boy is thoroughly embarrassed and is afraid he will not be accepted as a working member of his family of sheepherders when he fails to carry out a responsible task properly. "I Want That Dog" (East of the Sun, pp. 218-229) is a story about a girl with cerebral palsy who has been attending a special school for children with disabilities but has progressed enough so that she can care for herself and, therefore, is able to live at home and attend a regular school. Her family, unaware that she is afraid of dogs, decides to

celebrate her homecoming by giving her a dog. This convincing account of how she was able to hide and overcome her fear of dogs and why she chose a timid, shaggy, full-grown West Highland white terrier instead of a puppy is bound to delight the readers of this excerpt from Mine for Keeps by Jean Little. Not to be ignored is the tactful and artful way this noted Canadian juvenile novelist describes why children with cerebral palsy are handicapped in so many different ways and the therapy they are given that allows them to care for themselves.

Content Organization and Sequence

The Odyssey program is organized around seven program strands:

1. "Growing and Changing" (This strand actually focuses on motif).
2. "Adventure and Suspense" (This strand actually focuses on motifs).
3. "Humor" (This strand actually focuses on mood or tone).
4. "Fantasy" (This strand actually focuses on genre).
5. "Earth, Sea, and Space" (This strand actually focuses on setting).
6. "Quest and Heroism" (This strand actually focuses on motifs).
7. "Heritage" (This strand actually focuses on subject matter, namely historical, political, and sociological events, and persons of significance in American and various cultures of world civilizations and is included only in the textbooks for Grades 5 and 6). (Introduction to Odyssey, teachers' edition for each textbook, East of the Sun, pp. T16-T17)

At best, the strands used in this literature program tend to communicate the idea that literature is a "pot pourri," merely a mixture of elements so different from one another that they do not lend themselves to classification or categorizing. The organization of thematic strands in Odyssey lacks coherence and does not follow any of the usual frameworks for organizing literature study. At times the organization seems to pertain more to the content or topics addressed in the selections; the only strand in the program which identifies a specific literary genre is "Fantasy." Furthermore, when one examines the literary selections that are actually included, it becomes readily apparent that even here the authors do not adhere to a organizational system which focuses on concepts about the literary elements and characteristics of fantasy,

but focus on the content of selections instead. Although each of the selections contains fanciful content in which magic beings, places, and things in a world of fantasy are depicted, each selection cannot be classified as modern fantasy. (Modern fantasy contrasts with folk tales that are fanciful in that the author is known, rather than just the culture and perhaps the era.) In fact, a variety of genres is included in this unit: poetry, myth, folk tales, as well as fantasy (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 213-253). Even the title of this unit ("Long, Long Ago") is misleading; it certainly does not connote fantasy.

Although the organizational system does not highlight literary aspects of literature per se, occasionally the relationship between conceptual and procedural knowledge about literature per se is communicated in this program. To introduce the English folk tale "Teeny-Tiny" (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 66-70) the students are told that a folk tale is a "story that has been handed down for years and years," and that it was not written down when it was first told (pp. T108-T110). No explanation is offered as to why these stories traditionally were told instead of written. Nor are any of the simplest and most basic characteristics of this kind of literature identified. Since most children in Grade 1 can readily identify the presence of these characteristics in the folk tales they read, so then can most of the children in Grade 2, the audience to whom this lesson is addressed.

A description of the other two units in the Grade 5 textbook, East of the Sun, might serve to demonstrate how this relationship is handled. The units, "From America's Past" (pp. 415-467) and "America Grows Up" (pp. 469-545), contain literature about aspects of America's past and, therefore, include historical fiction, literary biographies (biographical fiction and fictional biography), and poetry. In no instance, in either of these units, is historical

fiction as a genre named or defined, nor are the specific characteristics or criteria for this genre identified. The literature objective for "Ambassador to the Enemy" (pp. 480-493), an excerpt from Caddie Woodlawn, Carol Ryrie Brink's classic historical fiction about the relationships between the white settlers and the Indians in Wisconsin in the 1860s, is to summarize the theme of the story (which is loyalty to one's friends). The literature objective for the selection "Where Was Patrick Henry on the 29th of May" (pp. 416-431), an adaptation of a historical biography by Jean Fritz, is to enjoy historical biography. The teachers are advised to introduce this story by explaining to the students that the word "biography" comes from the ancient Greek bio, which means life, and graphia, which means writing. They are then told to ask: "What is a biography?" The possible response provided is that it is "a written account of a real person's life."

The teachers are then told to tell the students that the story they are about to read is the biography of a man who helped found the United States in the late 1700s when most of the people in America lived in 13 colonies and were ruled by the King of Britain. One of the suggested postreading activities is to have the students choose a Revolutionary War leader, and, after reading about that person in an encyclopedia, or a biography, list 20 facts, some of which are important dates, that could be used in writing a short, historical biography about that person (pp. T202-T207). Anyone who knows the least bit about literary biography would challenge the idea that one can (or should) focus on the dates pertaining to the subject of a biography; there are other far more significant characteristics and criteria to attend to when writing a literary biography. It is an understatement, at best, to say that neither the literature objectives nor the questions or activities which are recommended in the lessons for these two literature selections would contribute significantly

to the students' conceptual understanding about historical fiction or literary biography as specific kinds of literary genre which can be defined and evaluated in terms of the specific characteristics or criteria.

The program goals would more likely be realized if all of the categories included in the strands listed above were drawn from the same classification system--all of the themes based on either genre or subject matter or motif, and so on. In this way, the students might build on their prior knowledge as they learn new aspects of it. Not only would they probably recall more easily what they learned in previous lessons, but they would more readily make connections between new and previously learned knowledge. Lacking an organizational pattern more consistent with the patterns traditionally accepted by literature scholars and critics tends to lessen the likelihood that students will be able to acquire any of the key ideas or generalizations needed to understand literature as a subject discipline in and of itself and more particularly as an art. This makes it more difficult for them to learn how to respond to it critically/aesthetically.

In the main, the literary selections in each of the series textbooks are organized around the content-oriented strands identified above. Usually the placing of one or another selection in a section designated for a particular strand can be justified; however, at times the logic seems a bit farfetched. For example, children in Grade 2 (usually age seven) would probably find "Teeny-Tiny" (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 66-70), an English folk tale about a woman who is frightened by a voice coming from a cupboard that gradually grows in volume, "suspenseful." But, one is hard put to expect that these same children would see "humor" in "Snowflakes Drift," the haiku by Kazue Mizumura (pp. 160-161), especially when the teacher asks them in a "postreading enrichment activity" related to mathematics to complete a worksheet that tests

their knowledge about and ability to read a thermometer! (p. T143). Grade 5 students would no doubt recognize the logic for including "Dangerous Voyage," the excerpt from Scott O'Dell's 1961 Newbery Medal Award book Island of the Blue Dolphins, in the section for literary selections pertaining to the unit on "Earth, Sea, and Space" (East of the Sun, pp. 378-391). There is little room for doubt, however, that these same students would fail to see the rationale for including the ballad "Oh, My Darling Clementine" in the unit on "Quest and Heroism," even if they were told it was sung by the miners during the California Gold Rush era.

The same steps are followed to guide the reading of each selection included in each unit, at each grade level. Summarized in the table below are these steps Sam Sebesta described in "Teaching Literature in the Classroom," the introductory article included in the Introduction to Odyssey which appears in the teachers' edition of each textbook.

Examination of the stated objectives, questions, activities, and evaluation procedures included in the teachers' editions and the worksheets reveals that the instructional efforts of the Odyssey literature program are focused not on learning about and appreciating literature but on the development of reading skills, composition skills, and study skills through the use of literature. Furthermore, examination of the "Skills Index" which is included in the Introduction to Odyssey reveals that at the very most, 40%-50% of the instructional efforts throughout this program are devoted to leaning about literature. This series would serve as a better source for teaching reading and study skills than a source for the study of literature, for it incorporates a logically sequenced program for teaching phonics (decoding and encoding), comprehension skills (ranging from identifying and using literal comprehension skills to the critical and judgmental comprehension skills), language skills (word

classification by parts of speech and usage and punctuation skills), and study skills (dictionary skills). These add up to the components of a traditional, but fairly comprehensive, reading instructional program. Considerable attention is given to using the content (facts) included in the literature to teach composition, speaking and listening skills, other subject matter--mathematics, science, health, social studies (especially history and geography)--and fine arts (especially dramatization and music).

All of this is not to negate the fact that attention is given to the development of some literary appreciation skills throughout this program. Some concepts about literature are hierarchically sequenced throughout this program. For example, in Grade 2 the children are asked only to recognize poetry as one form of literature, whereas in Grade 5 they are expected to identify elements of poetry. In Grade 2 the students are asked to recognize a folk tale or a fable as a kind of fiction, whereas by Grade 5 they are expected to be able to appreciate the literature of different cultures and to identify the cultural background of a literary work such as a legend, folk tale, or a poem in translation.

Although a sequence of concepts, skills, and attitudes about literature in some parts of this program can be identified, it appears that, in the main, this sequence is neither <u>consistently</u> logical nor psychological in its structure. The sequence consists of literary concerns that are largely isolated and simplistic rather than as a design that integrates aspects of literature which could lead the students to understand literature as an art and to learn to view its aesthetic elements more critically. In other words, the content is not organized around the basic understandings and principles (key ideas) rooted in literature as a discipline, nor are the relationships between these key ideas

Steps to Guide Reading

1. Preparing for Reading

   a. Provide motivation (begin with a question or an activity to show students that the selection about to be read has some connection to their lives or to their interests)
   b. Build schema (provide knowledge central to understanding the selection)
   c. Present new terms (vocabulary and concepts)

2. Silent and Oral Reading

"For beginning readers [grade one], the first reading of a [selection] is usually a shared experience, with the teacher reading aloud and the students joining in on a refrain or a predictable passage. Beyond this stage, students can be expected to read the selections independently." (There are exceptions to the practice of having the first reading by the students be silent reading. That exception applies to the reading of humorous stories and anecdotes. These stories are read aloud initially, for they "beg for sharing" and may lose their appeal if assigned to be read silently. Guided oral reading is also recommended when "the content, language, or theme is complex.")

   a. Permit each student to read at his/her own pace
   b. Encourage reflection (allow time for response and time to reread a passage before going on)
   c. Help students to enjoy and interpret the selection during a later oral reading

3. Postreading Discussion

The main purposes of an activity following the silent or oral reading seem to be to

   a. "Allow students . . . to express their responses to the literature they are reading and to listen to the varied responses of their classmates"
   b. Provide "an informal way for [the teacher] to assess the students' enjoyment, involvement, and understanding of what they have read" by asking them to summarize, elaborate, or discover implied motives or connections between events

      1. "Offer [the] students [in pairs or as a whole group] the opportunity to retell all or [a portion of the story by] encouraging them to add to or elaborate upon incidents that especially interest them"
      2. Ask the student(s) to share with their classmates (or with the teacher privately) what was discovered as a result of reading (in response to a preparation question posed before reading)

3. "Refer to the question and activity [section] in the [students'] textbook" which follows immediately after the literary selection, for specific kinds of questions are posed and arranged according to "levels" of thinking

a. Literal questions--recall specific information presented in a selection
b. Interpretive question--use one's own experience and reasoning (often these are forerunners to activities involving visual arts, dramatizations, oral and written compositions, and related reading)
c. Critical questions--evaluate the selection as a work of literature, apply it to a new situation, solve a problem based on an understanding of the selection, or investigate a new area connected to a selection

4. Evaluating Reading Experiences

The teacher is encouraged to

a. "Notice whether students seem to seek new reading experiences and whether the extension lessons are eagerly anticipated."
b. "Consider students' responses during [the] discussions":

1. Are they enthusiastic?
2. Do all contribute ?
3. Is there a give-and-take during the discussion to produce a deepened understanding of the selection?

c. "Consider students' answers to the questions themselves, in order to identify students' level of reading comprehension." In the interpretive and critical questions, encourage divergent thinking, based on each child's opinion and experience, but use "fluency," "flexibility," "originality," and "elaboration" when evaluating responses above the literal-level items, which in-and-of themselves call for divergent thinking and are usually easy to evaluate.
d. "Observe the students' responses to the reading through activities such as oral and written composition, dramatization, or creative expression in the arts," and "review the students' responses" to the worksheets. (These worksheets are said to be designed to provide enrichment and evaluation activities for most prose selections and the questions in them pertain to students' abilities to recognize elements of literature, to recall and infer information, and to identify words and word meanings.)

Source: East of the Sun, pp. T30-T36

about literature emphasized, either by contrasting along common dimensions or integrating across dimensions so as to produce knowledge structures that are differentiated yet cohesive.

A sequence more in accord with literature as a discipline in and of itself would reveal some identifiable focus on the nature of literature. This focus would help to empower the students to appreciate, understand, integrate, and apply what they have learned about literature more aptly in a broad range of situations involving literature in and out of school. Nonetheless, the students who participate in the Odyssey literature program are bound to acquire some valuable conceptual understandings and dispositions about literature (though somewhat fragmentary and unrelated), for despite this apparent lack of an appropriate sequence, there are some specific conceptual understandings and dispositions that the students are likely to learn about literature. These understandings and dispositions include the ability to recognize forms of literature (poetry, drama, fiction, biography); to identify the elements of fiction (characterization, setting, theme, plot, setting, and mood); to recognize the elements of poetry (rhythm, rhyme, figurative language, etc.); to recognize the relationship between an author's and/or an illustrator's life and work, and so on. However, they are not given the appropriate kinds of opportunities to learn any of this in significant depth because of the lack of focus on literature in the sequencing of what is taught about literature and the attempt to teach almost every aspect of the elementary school curriculum. Lack of depth of knowledge about literature is a major problem with this series.

Some aspects of the content are spiralled. For example, in teaching children about poetry, Myra Cohn Livingston, the major poetry consultant to this program, has done a good job of providing increasingly more difficult

content for children to read about, think about, and then apply to the specific examples of poetry. Furthermore, there is an fine representation of poetry by some of the most accomplished poets. One finds throughout this program child-oriented, yet excellent poetry, by such noted poets as Eve Merriam, Karla Kuskin, David McCord, Carl Sandburg, Kazue Mizumura, Ogden Nash, Langston Hughes, Lilian Moore, Lucille Clifton, Eloise Greenfield, Myra Cohn Livingston, Walter de la Mare, Lewis Carroll, Ted Hughes, Edward Lear, Theodore Roethke, Robert Frost, John Ciardi, and X. J. Kennedy.

Spiralling is less effectively presented with other forms of literature, for the focus is on the content (topics or the facts and the time or place of the action) in the stories rather than on aspects of the genre per se. The "Fantasy" thematic strand serves as an example here. At each grade level, the editors apparently chose to highlight a different aspect of the setting (time or place) or the element of magic or make believe in the selections in each fantasy unit. At the second-grade level, the fantasy element focused on is "magical beings, places, and things in a world of fantasy"; at the next grade level it is "tall tales and amazing events"; at the fourth-grade level it is "illusions and transformations"; and at the next grade level it is "characters with amazing or unusual talents."

Content Explication in the Text

Ostensibly, in creating a curriculum that spans the elementary grades from one through six, there is not only a gradual increase in the level of sophistication and maturity inherent in the concepts, facts, and attitudes the students are expected to learn, but this gradual progression in learning and understanding about aspects of a subject is built upon the students' prior knowledge. One might ask, therefore, if and how the creators determine or assess the

students' prior knowledge before they introduce a new, more complex concept that is dependent upon or associated with those that should have been learned in previous lessons. The answer to this question will reveal if the topics that are dealt with throughout the program and the treatment of each are indeed appropriate for elementary school children in general and especially for those at a designated grade level.

Since "fantasy" is the only literary genre included in the strands for the entire Odyssey program, it seemed that in order to answer these questions, we would have to consider how the thematic strand of fantasy is treated in at least three elements of the program: (1) how fantasy is defined in the series, (2) the particular unit titles which intended to convey the essence or the nature of fantasy, and (3) the particular selections included in each "fantasy" unit.

As was mentioned previously, fantasy, as a genre, is defined only once throughout the series as a "fiction with fanciful characters and plots" (Across Wide Fields, p. 424). The editors apparently assumed that once the definition of fantasy was covered in the Grade 4 textbook, the definition did not need to be repeated. Within the same textbook that it is defined, it is listed as one kind of fiction and the editors indicate that in fantasy "magical things happen--people fly or animals and toys talk," and, probably to differentiate it from folk literature which has no known author, they added that fantasy "has a known author" (Across Wide Fields, p. 107).

To recognize elements of fantasy in a story is the literature objective identified for the selection entitled "Laughing Gas," an adaptation from the classic fantasy novel Mary Poppins. To accomplish this objective, the teachers are urged to introduce the story by asking the students what they expect to find in a fantasy. After waiting a few moments for the students to respond,

the teachers are then instructed to explain that "a fantasy is a story that comes from the imagination and that, just as in a daydream, anything at all can happen in a fantasy, including events that would be impossible in real life" (East of the Sun, p. T113). To set the purpose for reading this story, the teachers are to tell the students that in the fantasy world of this story some events take place for preposterous reasons and some lead to impossible effects and that this gives the story its sense of being set in a magical world.

They are then to read the story to find out "what odd things happen in this world and what causes the fantastic events" (p. T114). While, in essence, all of these points are included in the usual characteristics which define fantasy, the question remains: Is there sufficient information embedded in these simplistic definitions and descriptions at any one time or in a manner to enable the students to add to what was learned previously about fantasy, to assure that their understanding of fantasy as a specific kind of literature would be correct and clear, and to spark their interest enough so they want to read more stories in this genre? It seems unlikely.

Modern fantasy, science fiction, and science fantasy selections are included in the fantasy strand at each grade level, but so is what seems to be an inordinate amount of folk literature. Some of the folk stories do contain fanciful elements, but few literature scholars or critics would consider folk literature and fantasy as the same literary genre. They should be treated as separate genres. But folk literature is in the public domain. It is not copyrighted material, and one does not have to pay permissions fees to reproduce it. It is not surprising, therefore, that it appears so frequently in this program.

None of the units on fantasy have been restricted to the literature selections of that particular genre. For example, in the unit entitled "Truly

Amazing Tricks," the unit which was purported to focus on fantasy (East of the Sun, pp. T17-T18), a Greek legend, six poems, and an informational article are mixed with the modern fantasy selections. This practice of designating a particular genre to a strand and then mixing it with other genres obviously would not help the students to learn the characteristics of that genre (in this case, modern fantasy) as a specific literary genre. Instead, it would either encourage them to focus on the contents of the selections (for each of these stories and poems speak of happenings or things that are unreal). Or, the students would have to unlearn what they learned during the course of this program, if and when they reached a point in their studies that they had to identify, analyze, or evaluate literature in terms of the specific characteristics of a particular genre. This approach to learning is not only inefficient, but it leads to confusion. It is educationally unsound and unwise to teach students something at one level which they will have to unlearn at another level.

Regardless of the many modern fantasy selections that are included at each grade level (excluding the plethora of poems and folk tales about things and events that are unreal), scant attention is given to the characteristics of fantasy as a literary genre. More precisely, not enough is taught, retaught, or built upon prior knowledge about the characteristics of this genre. It is unlikely, therefore, that students would be empowered to recognize the genre consistently or evaluate the quality of the writing of modern fantasy when they pursue leisure reading or any reading outside of the classroom.

Conceptual understanding about literature is attempted in the explanations provided and in some of the follow-up exercises recommended in the teachers' editions of each textbook. Occasionally, efforts are also made to reinforce conceptual understanding about literature in the study questions provided at

the end of most of the literary selections in textbooks. Supposedly, these questions range from literal thinking to critical/evaluative thinking, but most of them evoke literal, interpretive application thinking about the content of the literary selections rather than critical thinking about the interrelationships and integrative aspects of the literary elements per se or the quality of writing in general. Less often are critical thinking questions posed about the literary aspects of the selections. Seldom do the follow-up activities take the children back into the literature to extend or reinforce their understanding of its aesthetic aspects. Instead they move their thinking away from the literature itself.

To determine if and how the editors attempted to develop conceptual understanding about literature in multiple ways, we looked at how and what literary concepts about folk literature were presented throughout this program. We examined each of the textbooks to determine (1) how folk literature was defined and described, (2) if and how the questions and follow-up activities contributed to the students' conceptual understanding about the nature of folk literature, and (3) if and how the students were taught to evaluate the quality of the retelling of a particular folk tale. Although the discussion which follows focuses on how conceptual understanding about the nature of folk literature was developed in the textbooks for Grades 2 and 5, the approaches used to develop these understandings in the textbooks for the other grades will be cited only if they differ in any way from the two textbooks targeted for the in-depth analysis.

The literature objective for "Teeny-Tiny" (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 66-69) is to recognize repetition in a folk tale. To follow through on this objective, the teachers are told to introduce this story by telling the children that "Teeny-Tiny" is a folk tale and then to ask the students to

define the term "folk tale." The answer the children are expected to give is that a folk tale is "a story that has been handed down for years and years" (p. T109). Since folk literature is defined in this or similar ways in all of the preceding textbooks, the editors of this literature program are probably justified in expecting second graders to know how to answer this question. They are then told to "point out that folk tales were not written down when they were first told." The teachers are then instructed to have the children find England on a world map and to tell them that this folk tale comes from England. Nothing more is said about or done with the nature of folk tales as a specific genre until "The Magic Porridge Pot" (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 216-226), which appears 28 selections (or 146 pages) later. Although the literature objective for this selection is to distinguish between reality and fantasy and, therefore, had little, if anything, to do specifically with facilitating conceptual understanding about the nature of folk literature, the teachers are told that to set the purpose for reading this story they should

> have the children read the author's credit line below the title. Ask: What does it mean to retell a story? (the writer did not make up the story; he or she is merely telling it in his or her own way.)
>
> Tell the children that many folk tales and fairy tales have been retold for hundred of years. In this tale a girl is happy to receive a magical gift from someone until she finds out that magic can work against you as well as for you. Tell the children to read the story to see what happened when the girl gets herself into a sticky problem with a magic porridge pot. (The Heart of the Woods, p. T173)

Two selections later, in connection with "The Trolls and the Pussy Cat," and to facilitate the literature objective, "recognizing fantasy in a folk tale," the teachers are told to introduce the vocabulary by telling the students that "trolls are little or giant make-believe people that we read about in folk tales. Trolls usually play tricks on other people" (p. T176). To set the purpose for reading this story, the teachers are told to "explain to the children that many strange make-believe events happen in folk tales. As

they read, they should pay attention to the fantasy within the story and how the characters react to the strange happenings" (p. T175).

For the folk tale "The Traveling Musicians" (pp. 258-270), which appears four selections after "The Trolls and the Pussy Cat" in an entirely different unit (pp. 255-314), the literature objective is to enjoy the humor of a play based on trickery and misunderstanding among characters. But, the teachers are directed to provide the necessary background for this story by telling the students that "as long as there have been people, there have been folk tales. This folk tale is from the collection of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. These brothers collected many of the German folk tales that we know" (The Heart of the Woods, p. T188). To set the purpose for reading "The Traveling Musicians," the teachers are to tell the students that

> it is a folk tale about four friends who want to be musicians. . . . It is a funny story that tells about how bad people were tricked. As we read the story that has been made into a play, think about how the bad people were tricked. Also, remember what made you laugh in the story. (p. T188)

The next selection is a map indicating the route the characters in "The Traveling Musicians" followed, and the literature objective is to understand setting. To accomplish this objective the students are to be told that the time and place where a story happens is called a setting, and that a story can happen in more than one time and place. After the story is introduced with this information, the students are to be asked to review the story and then match the sentences that were listed on the page with the right places on the map. No specific or significant conceptual understanding about the settings characteristic of most western European folk tales is directly addressed through this lesson.

The literature objective for the next story, "The Elves and the Shoemaker" (pp. 274-282), is to identify folk tales as a literary form, yet, just as is

the case with the questions or activities relating to the other folk tales, the questions and activities relating to this story, are not designed to promote accomplishment of the designated literature objective. To set the purpose for reading "The Elves and the Shoemaker" teachers are told to

> explain to the children that this story is a folk tale that tells about people who did helpful things for each other. Like other folk tales, it follows a pattern "The Gingerbread Man," "The Three Bears," "The Little Red Hen."
>
> As they read, ask the children to remember who did helpful things for someone else and what pattern is repeated throughout the story. (The Heart of the Woods, p. T193)

In the Grade 5 textbook, the folk tale is identified as a key concept to be presented by the teachers during the prereading component of the folk tale "Two of Everything" (East of the Sun, pp. 48-57). This time the definition of folk tales is somewhat modified, for they are defined as "old stories that have no known author and are passed on orally" (p. T93). The fact that they were "passed on orally" is a new factor to be considered, and to heighten its significance in considering the nature of the folk tale, the teachers are told to tell students that when stories are passed from person to person orally, it means that they are "told aloud." The teachers are directed to also tell the students that

> most [of the folk tales] are generations old, and no one knows who first made them up. Indeed, since folk tales change in the telling and retelling, they don't have any single author. Writer Li Po, for example, didn't make up the story "Two of Everything," but merely wrote down a story he had heard from someone else. (p. T94)

Two literature objectives for this lesson focus on aspects of the folk tale: to recognize the use of repetition, magic, and fantasy in a folk tale and to identify the characteristics of a folk tale (p. T93). Two out of the three activities included in the postreading component of this lesson are related to these objectives:

Listing Fairy Tale Devices (Easy) Tell the students that many fairy tales contain some magic item that supplies wealth or useful goods to its owner. Point out as examples the Hak-Tak's pot, Alladin's lamp, and the goose that lays golden eggs. Have the students list as many such magic items as they can think of, either devices they think up themselves or ones that have appeared in stories they have read.

Finding and Comparing Folk Tales (Average) Have students find a folk tale from someplace other than China and tell it to the class. Suggest that they seek a librarian's help in finding collections of folk tales. Ask the students to tell the class before they start what culture their folk tale is from. The class may then want to compare this folk tale to the one about Hak-Tak and discuss similarities and differences between the two cultures by their folk tales. (p. T95)

In relation to the first activity, it should be noted that the editors have used the terms folk tales and fairy tales interchangeably. Admittedly, some folk tales are fairy tales, but not all folk tales are fairy tales. Fables, legends, or myths could also be folk tales. Furthermore, there are also modern fairy tales and modern fables, stories which were shared with others originally in the printed form rather than through the oral tradition and stories whose authors are known. The authors' practice of interchanging the terms fairy tales and folk tales throughout the program should be questioned, for it is transmitting misinformation which eventually will have to be unlearned.

The wording of the second activity is far too vague to be meaningful. One might ask, Does this question mean that the children are to compare the folk tales in terms of such cultural influences as the plot structures, the pervasive tone of the stories, the kind of humor (verbal or physical, cynical or satirical), the traditional religious beliefs and mores, and probable influence of the geography on the settings? Or, do they just mean the differences between the storyline of each folk tale? If they really mean aspects of the culture evidenced in the tales, they are requesting that the children engage in some mighty mature and sophisticated comparisons, comparisons that one cannot

make without delving into the history, language, religion, customs, and so forth of a cultural group.

The subtitle for "The Hero's Promise" ("A Greek legend retold by Ian Serraillier," East of the Sun, pp. 138-152), alerts the readers to the fact that this story is a Greek legend. The introduction to the story states that Theseus is "one of the greatest heroes of ancient Greece," that stories about this character have been told for centuries, and the story they are about to read tells how Theseus saved 14 young Athenians who were to be sacrificed to the Minotaur, a creature, half man and half beast, who ate only human flesh. The definition of the legend which the teacher is instructed to present to the students is that it is "a story about the exploits of a hero" (p. T122) and that "although many legends may have a historical basis, they are by no means realistic, but contain elements of exaggeration and often of magic" (p. T123). Immediately following this story, in the section listing questions and activities relating to the story, readers are told a bit more about the characteristics of a legend: "Legends are stories that are handed down from the past. Legends often tell about heroes with amazing talents" (p. 153). This additional bit of information about the legend might well be interesting to the readers, and it might even help them to understand the characteristics and nature of this kind of literature a little better, but the questions posed about the story ask the students to do little more than literal thinking with this information: "What talents did Theseus have? How did he use them?" (p. 153).

The follow-up activity for "Laughing Gas" in the students' edition (East of the Sun, pp. 104-120) tells the students to create a new fantasy device for another Mary Poppins adventure. To accomplish this they are asked to draw a picture of the device, list the words that describe it, and then write a

description of how the device works and what makes it stop (p. 121). There is little doubt that this kind of activity would foster development of the students' imaginative and creative thinking powers, but it would not help to extend the students' understanding of what the author did with language and action to reveal the nature and power of the fanciful elements in her story. Nor do the suggestions to the teachers for extending the story appear likely to help the students to understand the nature of this genre or the specific attributes of this popular classic better. Classified as "Easy," "Average," or "Challenging," respectively, they are as follows:

> Have the students draw their own pictures of the tea party at Mr. Wigg's house. Then have them write captions for their pictures as if the pictures were photographs appearing in a newspaper or magazine account of a real event.
>
> Have the students write a paragraph describing the place where Mr. Wigg lives--what the neighborhood is like, what his building is like, what sorts of furniture he has, and so on. Have the students base their description mainly on the story illustrations.
>
> Ask the students to write the story Miss Persimmon might have told about the afternoon that Mary Poppins and the children came to visit Mr. Wigg. Remind the students that Miss Persimmon witnessed some but not all of the events described in "Laughing Gas." Suggest that Miss Persimmon's story would include the events she did witness as well as an account of whatever the students think she was doing when she was not in Mr. Wigg's apartment. Emphasize that the story should be written in the first person. (East of the Sun, p. T115)

These examples of the activities (designed to introduce the stories, to provide background, to set a purpose for reading, to follow-up or to extend the stories) serve to demonstrate some of the common failings of the Odyssey series. Each activity is probably fine in and of itself, but each accomplishes little, if anything, to develop the students' understanding and knowledge about literature in general and fantasy in particular. These activities also illustrate the fact that the text is structured primarily around strands which focus on the content or subject matter in the literary selections rather than

on key ideas around which literature is usually studied and evaluated, namely the criteria for the literary elements and the characteristics of genre. These key ideas enable one to identify literature as a specific discipline; they characterize the nature of literature so that it is distinguished from any other subject. As has been indicated in the discussions above, fantasy is the only literary genre identified within the set of thematic strands. Other genres of literature, especially folk literature, along with an excellent sampling of poetry are presented, defined, and explained. But the lack of a cohesive structure around one of the usual literature frameworks (such as genres) makes it more difficult for students to learn about literature in a way that fosters the development of critical/aesthetic response to the reading of literature in school or outside of the classroom.

Throughout the series text-structuring devices and formatting are used to call attention to the objectives and components of each lesson. For example, heavy-leaded type and section headings consistently identify regular features of the program such as the units and the "Connections" section in each component of the program: the teachers' editions, the students' editions, and the copy masters. All of these text-structuring formatting devices serve to simplify somewhat the way in which the program might be read and implemented by both students and teachers. The text-structuring devices for literature instruction involve differentiating the literature selections from the explanatory material, from the questions at the end of the selections, and from the suggested activities. The formatting devices and effective placement of illustrations (diagrams, sketches, and occasionally photographs) are varied in size and are placed in the text margins, among the printed matter, and at the beginning of each unit. All of this helps to make the textbooks look different and interesting as the readers progress from page to page, from the front of

the book to the end of it. They also extend and enrich the words that make up each story, poem, or essay and aid in comprehension of these words, highlight aspects of the selections which are deemed important at that point in the story, and they signal to the readers what is to follow.

There seem to be no logical links (in terms of the subject matter or content, or the themes or literary genre) between the units which make up a textbook for any one grade level. Instead, each unit is presented as a separate entity. Students would be hard put to connect anything they thought about or learned about in the literary selections in the unit entitled "Never Give Up" (East of the Sun; pp. 155-239), which supposedly focuses on the strand of "Growing and Changing," with anything in the selections in the unit entitled "Facing the Unknown," which focuses on the strand of "Adventure," or with the unit "It Must Be a Trick," which focuses on the strand of "Humor," and so on. Any links that can be identified are those which exist within each unit; these links are based on the subject matter or content contained in each of the selections included in a particular unit. The links are not based on the literary genre or the themes of the selections that comprise a unit's curricular goals or plans. The consequence of focusing on the subject matter or content of the literary selections to create the units, instead of on the genre or themes inherent in the selections, minimizes literature as a discipline with a nature or characteristics of its own; that is, it minimizes the idea that literature is a form of art and should be read and interpreted in a manner quite different from the printed matter typical of other disciplines, especially the sciences.

For the most part, a good attempt was made to provide effective representations of content through the use of examples, analogies, diagrams, pictures, overheads, photos, and maps to help the students to relate the content to

current knowledge and experience that is included in the literature selections. The textbooks are profusely illustrated in a variety of ways to aid in the presentation and understanding of the selections. First, four-color, double-page illustrations introduce each unit. In each case, these illustrations reveal attempts to carry out the motif inherent or implied in the particular strand focused on in a unit. Second, the illustrations which accompany the literary selections are colorful and, for the most part, represent the literary elements of the stories, poems, and expository articles which are anthologized in each textbook. Worthy of note is the quality of the art design and the graphics (drawings and diagrams) throughout each textbook and from textbook to textbook. Although most of the illustrations are fairly realistic with some inclination toward the cartoon art style, the illustrations do vary in styles of art, media, size, and placement on the pages.

Third, in a number of cases, reproductions of the illustrations from the trade book edition of the selection are retained intact with the full, excerpted, or slightly adapted versions of some of the literary selections. Pierre: A Cautionary Tale in Five Chapters and a Prologue, written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak, and "The Garden," a chapter from Frog and Toad Together, written and illustrated by Arnold Lobel, are just two examples among the many selections throughout this literature program in which both the text and the illustrations of the original trade edition were retained intact (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 14-30 and pp. 50-61). Fourth, in some cases, the texts of selections appear in their original form, but new illustrations were created for this series by someone other than the original illustrator. The Magic Porridge Pot, a German folk tale retold by Paul Galdone, serves as one example of this practice (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 216-226). Fifth, in the pupils' textbook, photographs accompany very brief biographical sketches of noted

authors and illustrators. For example, in The Heart of the Woods, authors Lucille Clifton, Felice Holman, and Else Holmelund Minarik are highlighted, as are noted illustrators Ernesto Galarza and Maurice Sendak. In East of the Sun, noted authors Natalie Babbitt, Sid Fleischman, Virginia Hamilton, and Jean Little are also featured.

The colorful illustrations may initially attract students' interest and encourage the students to read the selections in the texts. The kinds of thinking in response to the illustrations fostered throughout this program should be criticized. The focus seems to be on the literal interpretation of the content of the illustrations and occasionally on the matching of the literal interpretation of the text with the literal interpretation of the content of the illustrations. The questions and the activities seldom direct the students' attention to the aesthetic elements of the illustrations (artists' media, style of art, effective use of space, rhythm and balance of line, shading, etc.); critical/aesthetic response to the illustrations is, in essence, absent throughout this series. The statements which follow are typical of the kinds of directions and questions which are given regarding response to the illustrations in the selections. To introduce the children to the unit "Tell Me Something Very Silly," the teacher is instructed to have them read the title (of the unit) and to

> ask them to look at the picture that illustrates the opening of the unit. Ask: What is silly about this picture? (An octopus is juggling some balls.) Why is this silly? (An octopus can't juggle.) What does the picture make you want to do? (laugh or smile). (The Heart of the Woods, pp. T85-T86)

In the prereading component of the "Magic Porridge Pot" (The Heart of the Woods, pp. 216-226), first the vocabulary and then the story is introduced by referring to the illustrations as follows:

> Show the children the picture of the woman on page 218. Explain that the garment the woman is wearing is a cloak. Another word for a cloak is a cape. (p. T172)
>
> Have the children look at the first illustration in "The Magic Cooking Pot." Ask several children to describe what they think is happening in the picture. Ask: How does the girl feel? (Possible response: She is sad.) How do you know? (Possible responses: she is frowning, she has her head down.) Why do you think she is sad? (Possible responses: Her basket if empty; she is lost; she is hungry.) (p. T173)

To plan the reading strategy to be used when reading the factual article "The Amazing Ben Franklin," in the textbook for Grade 5 (East of the Sun, pp. 94-98), the teachers are told to tell the students to read the selections silently and to study the illustrations. They are then instructed to help the students to trace the path of lightening after it strikes the lightning rod and the paths taken by the cool air, warm air, and smoke in the Franklin stove (p. T109). The illustration which is supposed to depict the purpose of the lightning rod is so obscure no one could "follow the path" of the electrical charge when the lightning struck the rod which Franklin reportedly placed on the roof and down the side of a building. And all the readers need to do to follow through on the question about the stove is follow the arrows which are clearly marked. This is hardly a challenging task for students in Grade 5! No mention is made in the list of objectives for the reading of "A Hero's Promise," about the significance or implications of the cultural or ethnic origin of this legend about Theseus. This aspect of folk literature (particularly in a legend) is superficially alluded to throughout the teaching plans for this selection (East of the Sun, pp. T121-T124). To help the students to accomplish this objective, the teachers are instructed to refer to the illustrations in the following manner when introducing the story:

> Have the students look at the title page and the first two illustrations. Ask: What kind of legend is this? (Greek) Inform the students that the ancient Greeks developed many legends about gods,

> goddesses, and ordinary people. Point out that this story is just one of the many adventures of Theseus, who was one of the greatest heroes of Greek legends. (p. T122)

It is hardly likely that conceptual understandings about how the cultural aspects determined or at least influenced the elements of this kind of literature will be developed through this approach to illustrations. If any conceptual understanding is accomplished, it would be little more than to acquire some obscure notions about when the action in this legend took place, or about the ancient Greeks' clothes and hair styles, the stereotypical images about the Greeks' physical characteristics (e.g., skin color and facial features), and the structure of the Athenian ships.

Some of the drawings and paintings amount to more than the literal or superficial replication of the text in visual rather than verbal terms. Some of the stories in The Heart of the Woods are illustrated with pictures that not only support the text but enrich and extend it; they are illustrated with all or most of the illustrations that appeared in the original trade book: "Pierre: A Cautionary Tale in Five Chapters and a Prologue" (pp. 14-30), illustrated by Maurice Sendak; "Grandfather's Story" (pp. 72-82), illustrated by Maurice Sendak ; "Sebastian and the Monster" (pp. 90-105), illustrated by Fernando Krahn; "The Garden" (pp. 50-61), illustrated by Arnold Lobel; and "Split Pea Soup" (pp. 292-297), illustrated by James Marshall. A few stories in East of the Sun are illustrated with pictures that effectively support, enrich, and extend the text. "A Very Talented Cricket" (pp. 124-136), which, as far as we are able to determine, is the only story in this textbook illustrated with some of the pictures made for the original book from which this selection is excerpted, namely The Cricket in Times Square, written by George Selden and illustrated by Garth Williams. The illustrations prepared by Jack Wallen and John S. Walter for "Can You Believe Your Eyes?" (an informational article about

optical illusions) contains an excellent variety of diagrams, photographs, and pictures which effectively reinforce, deepen, and enrich the text.

Unless a better attitude about illustrations is modeled by the teachers, and they guide the students responses to the illustrations with more appropriately phrased questions and directives, it seems unlikely that critical thinking or any other kind of higher level thinking will be fostered about these fine illustrations and the other illustrations in the Odyssey textbooks. Nor are they likely to elicit aesthetic response to the illustrations themselves or even to aspects of the story. Certainly, the instructions which are given to the teachers in the teaching plans do not provide the source for the kind of modeling that would foster critical/aesthetic response to the content and the overall quality of the illustrations. If one considers most of the illustrations in this series and considers the kinds of directives and questions which the teachers are told to address as they teach the lessons, one can only conclude that the children are unlikely to go beyond mere recognition or literal interpretation of the content in the pictures.

Except for the stories illustrated by such notable illustrators as Sendak, Lobel, and Krahn, most of the illustrations in this literature program tend to be the type of paintings and drawings typically found in mass market picture books. Occasionally, however, diagrams, photographs, and maps are included to clarify a process, procedure, or route described in the text. In the main, these graphics reiterate literally and quite clearly what was said in words; occasionally the illustrations are too small or lacking in specificity to accomplish much. One example of an illustration which could just as well have been omitted is the diagram intended to depict the flow of air in the Franklin stove (East of the Sun, p. 97).

The arrows which are supposed to show the flow of air as it changes from cold to warm are easy enough to follow. Although the verbal explanation of the process that causes the temperature of the air to change is clearly numbered and described directly below the diagram, the diagram itself is too small and cluttered to interpret. Also, only the parts of the stove causing the change of temperature in the air mentioned in the verbal description below the diagram are actually labeled in the diagram, and none of the labels in the diagrams are numbered as they are in the caption under it. To use the diagram to full advantage and, thereby, understand even the most basic process involved in this invention, the reader would have to keep looking back and forth from the diagram to the caption under it.

Adjunct questions for the response to the literary selections in this series are provided in the teaching plans, and often also appear following the selections in the students' editions of the textbooks. The teaching plans contain a considerable number of questions and suggestions for activities before, during, and after students read a particular literary selection. Purportedly, they are designed to promote memorizing, recognition of key ideas, higher order thinking, diverse responses to the literary selections, and application.

There is a heavy emphasis on reading skills (e.g., vocabulary development, phonetic and structural analysis skills, and comprehension skills) throughout this program. There is also a heavy focus on the subject-matter content addressed directly or implied in the selections rather than on the literary aspects of the selections as the literary components or elements in prose or poetry, or the characteristics or criteria of specific literary genres. In most cases, the purpose for including diagrams, maps, and charts is to teach these reading skills. Graphics are used to extend understanding of the subject

matter content inherent in the literary selections, not to foster understandings of their literary aspects. The series editors made a concerted effort to embed the skill instruction related to reading in the content areas within this literature program, even to the extent of minimizing the literature experience and the study of literature as a subject in its own right.

Teacher-Student Relationship and Classroom Discourse

One of the most positive features of the Odyssey series is that current information about discourse as it relates to learning about literature and language arts is provided in the articles incorporated in the introduction. For example, Sam Sebesta's article on "Teaching Literature in the Classroom" includes short discussions on "Oral and Written Composition," "Interpretive Reading and Dramatization," and "Literature in the Content Areas." In Myra Cohn Livingston's article on "Poetry and the Teacher," teachers are encouraged to elicit imaginative response to poetry through oral reading and through activities such as choral reading and dramatizations. (Livingston, an award-winning poet, is a highly respected literary critic of children's and adults' poetry and a consultant for this program). Livingston strongly denounces the practice of teaching elementary school children to write their own poetry. The bibliographies of professional references and children's books which accompany these articles provide resources for the teachers who wish to go beyond what was introduced to them in these articles and to extend their understanding about integrating written and oral discourse and the various language arts in an elementary school literature program.

Extensive use is made of activities in which the students are urged to engage in discussions, expository writing, as well as writing and reading aloud stories, newspaper articles, television news reports, letters, diary or journal

entries, and scripts for dramatization. These language arts activities should facilitate students' comprehension and clarification of main ideas about the subject matter content in the stories, but they probably won't help the students to understand the nature of literature (especially the components or characteristics of particular kinds of literary selections) or to evaluate the literary quality of writing or illustrations. Some degree of creative thinking could be accomplished through these language arts activities, because the topics which they are asked to write about and the structures in which they must write (be it story, expository article, diary entry, etc.) often are within most students' range of interests, experiential background, and level of understanding.

Most of the questions and activities request responses that require little more than literal thinking, or at best, application thinking. Some questions and activities elicit analytical thinking about the subject matter-related content. Unfortunately, questions and activities which evoke critical thinking, such as asking the students to use specific criteria to evaluate and determine the effectiveness of the authors' ability to develop and integrate the elements or characteristics of literature per se in their writing, are noticeably lacking.

The following questions and possible responses recommended in the teaching plans for the postreading discussion of the play "The Great Quillow" (East of the Sun, pp. 58-73), based on James Thurber's book, will demonstrate the emphasis on literal and perhaps interpretive kinds of thinking which tend to be emphasized throughout this program.

> What did the villagers think of Quillow at the beginning of the story? (Possible responses: They had no respect for him; they thought he was lazy, dumb, and a troublemaker.) Why do you think the villagers decided to do what Quillow suggested? (Possible responses:

> No one had a better idea; Quillow proved that their ideas were not going to work.) What do you think the play says about cleverness as compared to size and strength? (Possible response: Strength is no match for brains.) (East of the Sun, p. T97)

The literature objective for the reading of this selection is to identify changes in perceived character traits. This objective in itself reveals that attention is on comprehension rather than on the critical thinking or evaluative response to what literary devices the author used to portray his characters, an important concept about this literary/aesthetic aspect of literature which could easily have been taught about this selection. In the follow-up activity on worksheet 11 recommended to accomplish the objective of identifying the sequence and development, students are told to number the 10 statements which appear on this page in the order they happened in the story. Here again, it is most obvious that critical thinking about neither the subject matter-related content in the selection nor about the quality of writing in this rewritten (dramatization) version of Thurber's story is addressed.

Immediately following this selection in the students' edition, questions and activities are provided. These too reveal the lack of emphasis on higher order thinking, particularly critical/aesthetic response to literature.

> Actors in a play understand the stage directions, the instructions for how to move and speak. If actors in this play are aghast at Quillow's impudence, how should they act?
>
> a. Pleased at Quillow's importance
> b. Upset at Quillow's lack of wisdom
> c. Shocked at Quillow's boldness (East of the Sun, p. 74)

For the follow-up activity the students are told to design a poster or newspaper ad. They are told to make sure that their poster or newspaper shows the characters in the play and hints at some exciting event or problem; they are reminded to include the time and place for the play too (p. T74).

Throughout this program the students are offered innumerable opportunities to talk about their interpretations of and opinions about aspects of the selections they have read. In most instances, the students are asked only to retell all or part of the selection. Sometimes they are paired for these retellings; most often the teachers guide the retellings as a whole-group endeavor, using questions to help the students to summarize, elaborate, or identify implied motives or connections between aspects in a selection. Occasionally, in the prereading phase of a lesson, the students share their interpretations of the titles or illustrations in "discussion" situations. Some discussions are based on the students' responses to the question-activity page in the students' textbook, which follows the prose selections. In the main, it is expected that the students' oral responses to these questions and activities will be based on what they have written and/or expressed in some graphic form rather than on spontaneous, oral presentation. On other occasions, students are asked to designate a particular passage in the story they consider to be "exciting" and which would motivate a listener to read the entire story. They are then asked to justify why they chose that passage. Generally, these "discussions" are concluded with a reading assignment or extending activity.

Usually, the kinds of thinking called for in these discussions about student responses to the literature in the textbooks are limited to literal and interpretative thinking rather than critical/aesthetic thinking. Discussions which have been designated in the teaching plans as indicative of critical thinking are those which are based on something the students have done with a selection: evaluated a selection as a work of literature, solved a problem based on an understanding of a selection, investigated a new area connected with a work (East of the Sun, p. T34). Examination of some specific examples

in which the students did these kinds of things with the selections will readily demonstrate that indeed the students are not engaging in critical thinking either about the content in the selections or about the aesthetic elements of the selections.

Following the reading of the informational article entitled "Can You Believe Your Eyes?" (East of the Sun, pp. 76-82) in which various kinds of optical illusions are identified and explained, the students are asked to "make a drawing in which two squares are the same size, but one looks bigger. Make another drawing in which two lines are the same length, but one looks longer. Try your drawings out on a friend" (p. 83).

The follow-up activity suggested for "Laughing Gas" (East of the Sun, pp. 104-120), focuses on understanding the cause and effect in the story rather than the characteristics of modern fantasy as a particular kind of literature. So, although students are asked to engage in critical thinking about an aspect of the content of this excerpt (the characteristics, especially the effects of laughing gas), they are not engaging in critical/aesthetic thinking.

> The story "Laughing Gas" is a kind of highly imaginative story called a fantasy. In the story, the laughing gas that makes people float is used as a fantasy device--something the author created to make the story more fanciful. Use your imagination to create a new fantasy device for another Mary Poppins adventure. First draw a picture of the device and list words that describe it. Then write a description of how the device works and also what makes it stop. (p. 121)

The excerpt from Philip Hall Likes Me. I Reckon Maybe (East of the Sun, pp. 181-196) is told from the perspective of the first person narrator. The question which addresses this stylistic literary technique comes the closest to any in this textbook to calling for critical/aesthetic response (critical thinking about an aesthetic element in a literary selection: "The author has Beth tell the story in her own words. Throughout the story, the 'I' is always

Beth speaking. How does Beth's own way of telling what happened help you enjoy the story?" (p. 197).

It appears that some of the activities recommended for postreading considerations of the prose selections (included in the students' textbooks on the page immediately following) as well as some of the activities recommended in the teaching plans do call for teacher-student discourse or student-student discourse. The focus of the discourse is on the content in the selections, not on their literary aspects. In every case, the recommended discourse is initiated by the list of questions and the recommended activities following the prose selections or by the questions recommended in the teaching plans in the teachers' editions. No opportunities for student-initiated discourse are indicated anywhere in this program. Occasionally students are asked questions calling for higher order thinking, but most questions and follow-up activities are fairly obvious, if not innocuous, and lack open-endedness. All too frequently they call for a specific verbal response which is to be expressed in a few words or a few sentences at best. Consequently, it seems unlikely that students would participate in true discourse during each lesson.

The "authority for knowing" appears to come from three main sources: (1) the printed word, be it printed in the students' textbook or in some other source they were instructed to read to get more (but not contradictory) information; (2) the teachers; and (3) the children's opinions and experiences. In the main, however, the text is taken as the authoritative and complete curriculum which the discourse is intended to elaborate and extend. The readings in the other sources and the testimonials are intended to extend or enrich the students' background of information related to the content in particular selections; they are not intended to alert the student to varying or contrasting perspectives which they could compare and contrast before arriving at their

own decision. Nor are they related to the varying perspectives one might consider when evaluating the aesthetic elements of these selections.

By far the majority of the questions or activities calls for individual children to tell one another or just the teacher the answer to a question or to report on some information gathered from some other source, rather than to engage in some kind of discourse. Typical of the kinds of things the students are asked to tell their classmates about are those which followed the biographical sketches about Washington Roebling, Helen Keller, and Kitty O'Neil ("We Can Do Anything," East of the Sun, pp. 234-236):

> Which person seemed most interesting to you? Give at least one reason for your answer.
>
> How did each of the people described show courage? What makes you think the way you do?
>
> Use books in the library to find out about how other disabled people have made significant contributions to American life. Here are four you might look up and report on: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Wilma Rudolph, Carl Joseph, and Jim Brunotte. (p. 237)

Only a very small portion of the recommended activities provide opportunities for the students to interact with each other (and not just with the teacher) in discussions, debates, and cooperative learning activities. The activity which follows "The Megrimum," the excerpt from Kneeknock Rise by Natalie Babbit (East of the Sun, pp. 298-313), might serve as an example which called for student verbal interaction, limited as it is:

> Natural events that appear strange or magical usually have a natural explanation. Think of three examples--or find three examples in informational books. Then divide a paper into two columns. Label the first column Megrimum Explanation. Label the second column Real Explanation. When you have written your two-column report, share only the Megrimum Explanations with others. Ask them to figure out the real explanations from what you have described. (p. 314)

Activities and Assignments

As a set, the activities and assignments aptly provide the students with a variety of opportunities for exploring and communicating their understanding of the content in the literature. It is questionable as to whether the activities and assignments would elicit anything beyond the first level of aesthetic, much less to the critical thinking level. For example, the elements of fiction (plot, setting, mood, characterization, style, and theme) or characteristics of genre (fantasy, historical fiction, folk tales, realistic fiction, and factual writing) are usually named and defined in very simplistic terms, at times at the expense of accuracy. Seldom do the activities and assignments elicit examination and evaluation of the elements and characteristics in a manner that would empower students with the depth and breadth of understanding needed to respond to literature critically/aesthetically.

Few of the activities and assignments elicit affective in addition to cognitive responses even in response to poetry, which is said by some literary scholars to be the kind of literature most likely to be responded to affectively. In Livingston's introductory article "Poetry and the Teacher," she argues that "one of the most meaningful ways of introducing children to poetry [is] to infect with delight, stress the joy, approach through the heart, and know that wisdom and understanding will follow" (The Heart of the Woods, p. T60).

Unfortunately, it appears these words of advice by Livingston were ignored in creating the teaching plans for "A Ghost Story," a poem by an unnamed Japanese poet (The Heart of the Woods, p. 85). Examination of the pertinent portions of the teaching plan will reveal that neither the objectives nor the

activities and assignments designated for this lesson would elicit affective response much less critical/aesthetic response, to this mood poem.

Two objectives are stipulated for this poem:

1. the literature objective: to identify the question and answer structure in a rhyme.
2. the comprehension objective: to make comparisons.

The recommendations for the prereading aspect of this lesson follow:

1. The students are to complete the "enrichment" vocabulary/decoding lesson on worksheet, the major objective of which is to build vocabulary through phonic analysis. For the component of this worksheet which focuses on developing understanding of the vocabulary used in the poem (ghost, old, and no) the students are to choose from three words the one correct word to write under the picture that is shown, (i.e., ghost, most, post; hold, fold, old; no, go, so), and for the decoding component of this lesson (long vowel sounds for post, gold, toad, boat) they are to choose from among these long vowel words the one which constitutes the answer to each of the four riddles cited on this work sheet and write that word in the space provided, (i.e., "I am a yellow metal. I can be found in some necklaces and coins. What am I?"). (The answer is gold.)

2. The word "post" is designated as the key word for this lesson and the poem, and incredible as it may seem, this word is defined for the teacher! The teacher is directed to write the word "post" on the chalk board, to have the children point out the post in the illustration, and then ask them to name a synonym or another word for post (pillar, pole).

3. To introduce the rhyme, the teacher is directed to have the students look at the illustration and ask them what they think has frightened the girl. (The answer is "the shadow of a tree.") This instruction is then followed by the teacher asking the students to describe what the shadow depicted in the picture looks like. (The possible responses are "a person" or "a monster.")

4. In an attempt to relate to the students' experiences, the teacher is instructed to have the students read the title of the rhyme together and then ask them how they feel when they hear the word ghost. (The possible responses are "afraid" and "excited.") (The Heart of the Woods, copying master 19)

The purpose for reading this poem is established by the teacher telling the students that some poems ask a question and give an answer in rhyme. The students are asked to listen to the poem for a question and answer. The class

is divided in two groups: one group asks the question, the other gives the answer. One must ask: Since when is this a bona fide kind of poetry???

The postreading activities are to review and extend the poem:

1. To "review" the poem, the teacher is instructed to ask the following questions (which are answered by having the students merely reread a particular part of the poem, a task that certainly does not call for higher order thinking!): "What is the question in the poem?" (The only possible response is, "Are you a ghost?") "What is the answer?" (The only possible response is, "No, I'm just an old dead tree.")

2. To "extend" the poem, the teacher is directed to offer one activity that is designated as "average" difficulty and another activity that is designated as "challenging." The "average" activity consists of dividing the class into pairs. One child in each pair chooses an object in the classroom and asks a question like the one in the poem. The partner is expected to respond as the object. For example, "No, I am just an eraser. You needn't be afraid of me." The "challenging" activity amounts to having the students to use the poem as a model and write a question and answer poem. The question should be two lines and the answer two lines. Before they begin, the teacher is told to help the students to decide on the topics of their poems. (Heart of the Woods, copying master 19)

Nothing in this lesson would appeal to the children's feelings or emotions to encourage an affective response to this poem. An affective response to poetry is so easily elicited by the very nature of the interrelationship and the interaction of the poem's elements (i.e., rhyme, rhythm, figurative language, the sound and the feel of the words, and even the brevity of words used to depict the content, which some poets designate as "the crystallized experience"), especially when poetry is read aloud and listened to.

As a set, a certain amount of scaffolded progress toward stated program goals (in contrast with specific lesson goals) is facilitated by the activities and assignments. Consider how the major goal #10 (to develop an understanding of literary forms, techniques, and styles) was scaffolded throughout this program. Concept understanding of a specific literary genre is usually approached by presenting the genre definition and characteristics. The definition and

characteristics becomes more sophisticated and complex when the genre is addressed again at the next higher grade level. This scaffolding was particularly noticeable when folk tales were taught in general, not necessarily the specific kinds of folk tales. Attempts at implementing the practice of scaffolding is seen in the "logical steps" upon which each teaching plan was developed. Each lesson practically consists of the same parts: Preparing for Reading, Silent and/or Oral Reading, Postreading Discussions, and Evaluating Reading Experiences, and Additional Readings.

Included in the Preparing for Reading section are the Objectives, the Materials, the Summary of the Story, and the Prereading activities. The Objectives for the lesson are identified. They usually pertain to characteristics or elements of literature, such as the use of repetition in a folk tale, understanding setting, recognizing a fantasy, or identifying the theme of a poem; a comprehension skill, such as vocabulary development, decoding skills (phonics and structural analysis), alphabetizing, classifying books by title, recognizing cause-and-effect relationships, or sequencing; and a content area: social studies (understanding the importance of friendship or understanding the free enterprise system), science (finding out facts about animals or describing characteristics of outer space), or health (describing cerebral palsy).

In addition to the specific literary selections designated for a lesson, the materials needed to complete the activities and assignments are listed. Typically, the materials named include (a) the number of the specific worksheets designed to evaluate or enrich the skills listed in the literature, comprehension, or vocabulary objective and (b) Home Letters, form letters notifying the parents that their child has started a new unit in the series textbook designated for his/her grade level.

The Summary of the Story is presented next and consists of a brief description of the plot or story line. The first part of the Prereading section is devoted to the identification and definition of the Key Vocabulary Words, followed by the directives (questions and statements which the teacher is to use as a way of introducing the vocabulary). The Introducing the Story section consists of questions and statements which the teacher should use to facilitate previewing and predicting skills and relating aspects of the story to the students' experiences.

In the Reading section, the teacher is directed to ask questions and assign activities which focus on Setting the Purpose for Reading and Planning a Reading Strategy.

The Postreading component of the lesson calls for Reviewing the Story, Discussing the Story, Evaluating the Story, and Extending the Story. Often optional worksheets are recommended for enrichment so that exercises pertaining to comprehension and content area study skills can be completed independently in the classroom or at home with or without parents' help. Most of the teaching plans end with "Related Readings," a list of children's books which can be used to extend the lesson and, although it is seldom stated specifically, are related in some way to the theme, the topic, or the genre of the literary selection focused on in the lesson.

All of the lessons throughout this program seem to focus on the centrality of language and on the holistic view of teaching and learning reading/language arts rather than on literature as literature, or in other words, literature as art. The lessons are usually intended to incorporate all of the communication skills, so that students will experience the holistic approach to language, and thus experience "language as a means of social communication, as the medium of personal thought, as the means of personal and social learning" (Goodman,

Smith, Meredith, & Goodman, 1987, p. 339). The intention is to make certain that the students have experienced three kinds of literacy: learning language, learning about language, and learning through language. There is no mention of providing a literary event for the students, nor does there seem to be much regard for eliciting critical/aesthetic response to the literature that is read. The main concern seems to be developing the literacy skills rather than literary skills and attitudes, even though several objectives for each lesson usually pertain to some aspect of literature.

Many of the teaching plans for the literary selections included in this literature program do not designate a literature objective. Yet, there are always numerous comprehension and subject-specific objectives, questions, and activities included in each lesson. It seems that the authors need to justify the reading of literature (not to mention the study of literature as an independent subject domain) by making connections with the teaching and learning of reading/language arts and other content area fields.

Seldom, if ever, do the suggested teaching plans which focus on making connections to the various subject disciplines help the student understand how that subject matter content was used to develop one or another of the literary aspects of the selection. (Yet one could do this so easily when studying the characteristics of historical fiction, science fiction, or literary biographies.) More often than not, the lessons direct the readers' attention away from the literature rather than into it. In other words, literature seems to be used as a tool to teach the facts or particular subject matter skills. The aesthetic elements of literature which make literature an object of art and the need to evaluate literature in terms of these elements are quite literally ignored.

Unfortunately, the end result of the approach to the teaching and learning of literature which typifies the Odyssey Literature Program is that one is presented with a literature-based whole-language reading/language arts program rather than a literature program. Despite the obvious lack of attention to literary understandings and critical/aesthetic response to literature, particular examples of good activities and assignments pertaining to some aspects of the study of literature can be identified throughout the series, as well as activities which could help to accomplish the program's major goals--addressing the importance of satisfying and extending the students' reading interests.

In the main, the directions for the activities, whether addressed to the teachers or to the students, are clearly stated and easy to follow. The only component of each teaching plan that is consistently too vague to be helpful is that designated as "Related Reading." In each case the list of titles is preceded by the statement: "The following children's books can be used to extend the lesson." Even though an annotation is provided for each of these titles, the teachers would not know what literary aspects they might focus on when comparing these books (except, perhaps the themes), unless they had already read each of them or had read substantial reviews about them. As with most of the literary selections included throughout the textbooks in this series, the selections recommended for related reading are usually quality literature and tend to vary in readability level; thus, empowering the teachers to offer students varying in achievement and interest in reading, books for independent reading on comparable themes, genres, and topics. These books would in all probability be of keen interest to most of the children for whom they are recommended.

The books recommended in the teaching plan to extend the lesson for "Bando," (East of the Sun, pp. T199-200) include other survival stories, each

of which are supposedly of different readability levels; some nonfiction selections are also recommended in this list of related reading. "Bando," an excerpt from the modern realistic novel entitled My Side of the Mountain, is the 1960 Newbery Honor Book by Jean C. George, which details how a young boy survives alone one year in the wilds of the Catskill Mountains. The literature objective designated for this lesson is to appreciate the contribution of setting to the mood of the story, and the comprehension objectives are to recall details, to make comparisons, and infer character traits.

Gloria Skurzynski's Lost in the Desert, an exciting high-interest, easy-reading realistic fiction novel depicting the survival techniques used by an 11-year old boy over a period of three days to meet the unrelenting challenges of the barren desert environment, is recommended for related reading. Two other survival stories are also recommended; these are examples of historical fiction novels in which the young protagonists survive in areas new to them: The Talking Earth by Jean C. George, tells of the experiences of a young Seminole Indian girl when she ventured out into the Florida Everglades to test the legends of her ancestors, and The Cay by Theodore Taylor, is a convincing portrayal of how a small boy, blinded when the ship he was on was torpedoed by the Germans during World War II, and an elderly Black sailor survived when they were stranded on a barren Caribbean Island. The reading achievement levels of these selections are rated "Average" and "Challenging" respectively.

Also recommended for related reading with "Bando" are two nonfiction books: Wilderness Survival Handbook by Alan Fry is a practical guide to survival techniques during every season of the year for hikers, skiers, canoers, and those who find themselves stranded in the wilderness. Labelled as a "challenging" book, this reference book tells how to find water, food, and shelter; it also shows the readers how to send distress signals. The other

nonfiction book is A Racoon's First Year by Dorcas MacClintock, an "Easy" book which depicts the characteristics of racoons and their ability to adapt to diverse environments. More often than not, the titles listed in the "Related Reading" component of the teaching plans are comparable in terms of the content of subject matter of the literary selection focused on in a particular story rather than on the literary aspects of literature, such as the components of literature (fiction or poetry) or the characteristic of a genre.

In the main, the activities have some relevance to the goals designated for a particular lesson and to the program in general. Many activities, however, seem to be too easy for most children within the age range or at the grade level to which they were designated. But more important, far too many of the activities fail to direct the children's attention into the literary selection for a deeper understanding of literary genres and the characteristics of each: the components of literature, the significance of the language of literature when compared to nonliterary writing, or the special features of the particular selection itself. More typically, the activities direct focus instead on purposes that are absolutely nonliterary: social or psychological adjustment, inculcation of moral or ethical values, as well as a medium or tool by which one might learn subject matter skills or facts (history, science, mathematics, etc.).

Listed below are the activities designated in the teaching plans as those designed to extend the story for "Lucy's Adventure," an excerpt from Lewis's The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. One is hard put to see how these activities would contribute to extending the children's understanding of the nature of the genre of this selection, namely a time warp fantasy, or the significance of the role that is played by the setting of this or any other

story for that matter and/or its relationship to the other literary elements that make up this story. The literature objectives identified for this selection were to appreciate descriptions of places in a story and to explain the popularity of a literary work.

> Collecting Illustrations for a Story (Easy) Have the students look through magazines for photographs and illustrations that could be of places described in the story "Lucy's Adventure." Emphasize that they can cut out parts of pictures as well as whole pictures. Suggest as possibilities pictures of old houses, interiors of old houses, wardrobes, and scenes of snowy woods.
>
> Describing an Imaginary World (Average) Have the students imagine that they too have a magic wardrobe that leads to a magical world. Tell them to write a description of the world they would find by walking through their magic wardrobe. Suggest that they imagine a world quite different from Narnia. Ask them to try to create an impression of this world by describing specific details that a person would see, hear, smell, taste, and feel there.
>
> Creating a Travel Brochure for an Imaginary World (Challenging) Ask groups of students who described similar worlds in the activity above to get together, unify their impressions into a single imaginary world, and create a travel brochure advertising vacation tours to the place. Suggest that they begin by contacting a travel agency for some samples of real travel brochures for actual places such as the Bahamas, Mexico, and Europe. Then have them write copy for their brochures and if possible get it typed up in columns. Suggest that they use selected photographs or art cut out from magazines to illustrate selected spots in their imaginary world, or create their own illustrations. Finally have them lay out the brochure on white construction paper, using paper cement to glue down the elements. (East of the Sun, pp. T166-167)

The linkages of the assignments and activities to understanding and application of literary concepts often are remote or even nonexistent. In contrast, the linkages of the activities and assignments to objectives related to reading comprehension skills, writing skills, or understanding and acquisition of facts and skills related to the content of subjects like mathematics, social studies, or one of the sciences are apparent. However, these linkages, whether they pertain to literature per se or to some other subject, are not made explicit to the students. Consequently, they are not encouraged to engage

in the activities strategically (i.e., with metacognitive awareness of goals and strategies). It seems that whatever questions and directions are included in the teachers' plans or in the students' textbooks are framed so that they can be quite easily understood and could promote the development of some kind of learning, albeit learning that is nonliterary.

When activities or assignments involve integration with other subject areas, the primary problem with the Odyssey literature program seems to be that it almost totally fails to use literature to accomplish "integration." Most of the selections generally used in "Connections" seem to be created specifically for this program and have none, or at best, have obscure connections with literature. Nor do these supposedly integrative kinds of activities seem to be the kinds to contribute to the students' understanding of literature as an art or to help them to learn how to respond critically/aesthetically to literature. Thus, the activities and assignments do not accomplish "integration." The activities and assignments generally serve to develop children's factual or propositional knowledge of the nonliterary subject matter areas, such as social studies or science rather than literature per se.

Except for the lessons in the worksheets, the activities and assignments do call for students to write beyond the level of a single phrase or sentence. Throughout the Odyssey program are such writing assignments as the following: Write a list of questions to be asked in television interviews with story characters; Write a story about a person who became successful as a result of hard work and a good product or service; Make up a useful product, give it a name and write an advertisement telling what it will do; Send a note to a secret pal that will make them feel good; Draw a strange-looking imaginary plant and write a paragraph about it, describing amazing and unbelievable

things the plant can do; and Select an event or character in American history and write a ballad made up of several quatrains that tell a story about that event or character. These writing assignments offer the students creative activities and/or give them opportunities to learn how to express themselves lucidly (sometimes within a prescribed structure), but they provide few opportunities to engage in higher order thinking or connect with the aesthetic elements of the literature selections to which they supposedly relate.

Assessment and Evaluation

The authors stated that the ultimate success of this literature program is based on whether or not the literary selections included in the textbooks enhanced the students' enjoyment of literature. They say enjoyment is an affective outcome that no written test can assess. In response, one might say that there is a substantial amount of research which demonstrates that when one learns about the aesthetic elements of literature, one not only learns what an author has done that made a story enjoyable, but one learns to evaluate the quality of that piece of writing more effectively.

The authors make it quite clear in the Introduction that testing and evaluation should be deemed an ongoing process that is a part of each day's activities. They stress that, in the main, children's progress in learning about literature should be assessed by accurate observations and monitoring, conducted consistently and continually in the full context of events pertaining to reading and responding to literature. Throughout the program the teachers are encouraged to assess the students' knowledge of literary elements and techniques used in the literary selections they studied, as well as their growth in literary appreciation, by examining the students' responses to the activities suggested in the students' textbooks and in the teaching plans.

They are not told how to assess these responses, however. Unfortunately, the evaluation worksheets cover comprehension, vocabulary study, word attack skills, and sequencing instead of the aesthetic elements of the literary selections.

The teachers are also reminded to assess the students' knowledge and understanding of these skills by considering their answers to the questions which call for various kinds of thinking, ranging from the literal thinking to critical thinking. Despite the voluminous amount of information and discussions about the teaching and learning of critical thinking in general and about literature in particular which appeared in professional publications in the 1970s and 1980s (Cianciolo, 1988), the authors continue to view critical thinking about literature as basically subjective. They tell teachers to expect students to vary greatly in their judgments about literature and that students' critical thinking about literature "can be evaluated in terms of their fluency, flexibility, elaboration, originality, and logic" (East of the Sun, p. T15). The authors should have acknowledged that the diversity in judgments about literature is due more to the affective aspects of response than to the critical thinking about literature.

Most of the questions bring little or no experience, knowledge, or understanding to responding critically/aesthetically to literature. Seldom do the questions or activities focus on key ideas about literature or direct the readers' attention to its critical/aesthetic aspects. If children are to think critically about these aesthetic aspects, they need help in focusing on some key questions in their reading and they need specific learning experiences that will give them practice in thinking about literature in this manner.

The recommended evaluation procedures do not provide ongoing attempts to determine what students are beginning to know. Nor do they provide for diagnosis and remediation. The answers are found in parentheses immediately following the questions listed in the teaching plans, and an answer key is provided for each of the brief responses required for the evaluation and enrichment exercises. (The evaluation worksheets pertain to comprehension and vocabulary and are intended to provide opportunities to evaluate the students' understanding of major skills and concepts developed in the program and the enrichment worksheets provide a wide variety of enrichment activities related to reading, literature, and other content areas such as social studies and science.) Examination of some of the evaluation sheets reveals more dramatically what minuscule attention is given to the literary concerns throughout this program and how few opportunities there are for critical thinking, or any other kind of higher order thinking for that matter. The topics designated for evaluation of comprehension are to tell the story order, name the feelings, tell why something happened, solve the story character's problem, remember the story, tell why something happened, finish the sentence, remember the details, find the effect, tell about story characters, give problems and solutions, find similarities and differences, give the setting, give the reasons, name characters and explain changes, and explain the danger. The topics designated for evaluation of vocabulary are to find the right word, find the opposite meaning, find word clues, and find the words that are alike.

The evaluation items suggest that comprehension of the literary selections and/or application of the content or the theme of the literary selections to some aspect of one's life experiences, code of ethics, or to the acquisition of some subject matter skills constitute mastery of literature rather than critical/aesthetic response of the literary selections. All too few of the

discussion and writing activities seem to have direct bearing on literary concerns and therefore, allow for little if any appraisal of children's understandings about literature per se. They do not reveal what stages of critical/aesthetic response the students are in when having read a particular literary selection or why they are responding to it as they did. More often than not, the discussion questions listed in the textbooks and the teaching plans seem to call for specific answers rather than diverse or open-ended responses and seldom do these questions ever promote true discourse about literary concerns, or for that matter, about any other topics. The written composition activities do seem to allow for individual thinking and encourage creative efforts pertaining primarily to nonliterary aspects; but here again, they do not allow for evaluation of students' understanding about the aesthetic aspects of literature or their ability to respond to it critically/ aesthetically.

Since the discussion questions recommended in the teaching plans and in the student textbook and the writing and oral composition activities tend to relate largely to comprehension and vocabulary and to other factual aspects of the content or subject matter-related aspects of the selections, there seems to be little attempt to assess accomplishment of attitudinal or dispositional goals. Nor do any of the questions or directives for assignments and activities promote metacognitive thinking-oriented goals.

As demonstrated in the discussions on Content Organizing and Sequencing, attention is given to spiraling and scaffolding the complexities in conceptualizing understandings about aspects of literature, especially the understandings pertaining to the characteristics of some literary genre. However, there was no evidence that specific suggestions or procedures were offered to the teachers that would enable them or even encourage them to assess

the students in terms of understanding these concepts about literature (see discussion about folk/fairy tales on pp. 40-49 of this manuscript). Nor were the students encouraged to engage in assessment of their own understanding/ skill.

The lack of attention to assessment and evaluation of children's learning and conceptual understanding about the aesthetics of literature and the critical reading of literature (or about anything that is being taught in this program) is perhaps the most serious weakness in this program. It should be mentioned that none of the components of the teaching plans focus on evaluation per se, and the only reference to evaluation in these plans is to direct the teacher to assign a worksheet on evaluation of comprehension or vocabulary. And in each case these worksheet lessons require responses in one word or a sentence or two and only one answer is correct. Some of the postreading activities, especially those designed to extend the selection studies, do call for elaborate written productions, but all too often even these tend to ask for factual recall or application of content unrelated to conceptual understanding of the literature as an art form or to the critical/aesthetic response to literature.

Directions to the Teacher

The suggestions to the teacher flow from a coherent and manageable model of teaching (and learning) what the program authors have designated as being worthy of teaching, namely reading comprehension and vocabulary skills as well as the factual content and skills related to other subjects like social studies, science, health, and even a bit of mathematics. Proportionally, very little that would be considered learning and understanding what is necessary to respond critically/aesthetically to literature is included. Most of the

lessons call for literal-level thinking (largely recall), interpretation and application, with some opportunities for inferential thinking. Attention to the teaching and learning of critical (evaluative) thinking, especially of the effectiveness of an author's development and integration of the criteria for the elements of fiction or poetry or the characteristics of particular literary genre, is noticeably omitted in the teaching plans, the teachers' worksheets, and in the activities listed after each selection in the student text.

Nine features characterize the teachers' editions of each textbook in this literature program:

1. The teaching plans are easy to use and are presented in a logical step-by-step manner, moving from the statement of objectives, to listing the resources or materials which will be needed or which are recommended (usually the worksheet lessons for evaluation, enrichment, connecting with other subjects), to the summary of the selection, to the directives and suggestions for teaching of the lesson.

2. The prereading portion consists of the key vocabulary and concept words and the directions for introducing them; suggestions for statements or questions the teacher might ask in order to provide the background information about some aspects of the story are then provided, as are ways in which the teacher might enable the students to relate aspects of the selections to their experiences.

3. The reading strategies to guide the students in reading each selection consist of questions and activities designed to set a purpose for reading and plan a reading strategy.

4. The postreading section consists of questions and activities which call for reviewing the selection, discussing the selection, and extending the selection. These activities usually involve written or oral composition and are usually designated as "easy," "average," or "challenging," so, ostensibly, the teacher can meet a range of student needs. Bibliographies of related children's literature selections are always included in the postreading component of each teaching plan.

5. Annotations on many of the students pages, with answers to all of the questions posed in the student text are included in the teachers' editions.

6. Bibliographies of professional articles and books about teaching strategies for teaching and using literature in the elementary school

are provided in the Introduction in the teachers' edition for each grade level.

7. Also included in the Introduction are some articles by the senior authors and the consultants of the program. Each of these authors addresses some theoretical aspect about selecting and using literature in the classroom and each includes a bibliography of professional resources about the aspects of literature discussed and a bibliography of children's literature pertaining to these topics.

8. Included in the introductory statement of each teachers' edition is an entry entitled "Resource Center," a paragraph providing biographical information about the authors and illustrators whose works appear in the textbooks.

9. The teachers' edition of the worksheets are designed to be used with each level of the textbooks in the program and consist of home letters in English and Spanish and lessons for enrichment and evaluation. The home letters are designed to introduce the parents to the program in general. As the children progress from one unit to the next, the letters are designed to inform the parents about the types of literature the children have been reading as well as a reading list of similar literature they might encourage their children to read for further reading enjoyment. The evaluation worksheets reportedly provide opportunities to evaluate students' understanding of the skills and concepts designated for the program; the enrichment worksheets are designed to provide a variety of activities that will enrich or extend the reading, literature, and other content areas. At the back of each worksheet, a suggested lesson plan is provided for the teacher as is a reduced version of the master sheet with the answers and a separate answer key.

The curriculum comes with a very adequate rationale, scope and sequence chart, and introductory section. Each of these facets of the literature curriculum statement provides clear and sufficiently detailed information about what the program is designed to accomplish and how it has been designed to do so. Given what the editors stated they set out to accomplish, this is probably one of greatest strengths of this literature program. The rationale (including the clearly defined program goals), the scope and sequence chart, and introductory sections are all included to give the classroom teacher specific direction in understanding the overview and aims of the series. Moreover, the combination of students' textbooks, the advice and resources in the teachers' edition of each textbook, and additional materials constitute a total package that

quite sufficiently enables the teachers to implement a comprehensive program, albeit, a reading/language arts program making extensive use of literature rather than a program designed to study literature and to teach children to respond critically/aesthetically to literature.

The materials in the teachers' editions of the text or the worksheets do not seem to provide the teacher with specific information about students' prior knowledge (or ways to determine prior knowledge). They do provide likely responses to instruction, questions, activities, and assignments, but one must keep in mind that the responses that should be expected to these questions call for convergent thinking rather than divergent thinking. In other words, there is usually only one answer that will be accepted as the "correct" answer. Some of the writing activities allow for divergent thinking, divergent in terms of using or applying creatively the vocabulary facts or concepts gleaned from the content or subject matter contained in the selection, not conceptual understanding about the aesthetic elements of these literary selections. Furthermore, guidance is not given in the teachers' editions or the worksheet lessons about ways the teachers can elaborate upon or follow up on text material to develop understanding.

Although, some of the questions are intended to promote discussions about some aspects of the content contained in the selections, the discussions these questions tend to promote call for convergent thinking rather than divergent or critical thinking. Little encouragement, explanations, or even examples are given to the teachers about posing questions that promote sustained bona fide teacher-student discourse surrounding assignments and activities. It seems that each teaching plan is based on the same structure; that is, each lesson is very logically developed to guide the teacher in moving from introducing the reader to the selection to be studied by presenting unique vocabulary or

concepts used in the story, to motivating the students to read it by establishing some specific purposes for reading it, to reading the story, and, finally, to following up that reading with some kind of question or interpretive activity to determine if the students understood certain aspects of the selection. This structure would be defined by some reading specialists as "scaffolding" students' progress and it is quite compatible with the current emphasis on the schemata approach to teaching comprehension. Nowhere in the directions to the teachers is any guidance given about how they might structure the activities to scaffold the students' progress while they are completing their assignments. Nor are suggestions offered about how they could provide positive and constructive response to the students following completion of these activities. Another unfortunate omission is lack of guidance regarding evaluation techniques or how to grade or credit the students for their participation in classroom discourse, work on assignments, performance on tests, or other evaluation techniques.

It is hard to determine or predict the degree to which the suggested materials would be accessible to the teachers who were following this program to teach literature. The materials suggested for use with this program are not especially idiosyncratic or iconoclastic. Quite the contrary, they tend to be titles that are quite well known to professionally prepared school and public librarians and to teachers interested and knowledgeable about children's literature. In schools where there is a central school library or media center and the guidelines of the American Library Association's basic book collections have been consistently adhered to, the materials recommended by the authors of this program should be accessible to the teachers. But many schools do not have central school libraries or media centers, and many times even if these schools do have a library or media center, they might not be staffed by

certified school librarians or media specialists. Unless some special effort is made by someone in such schools to keep the library holdings current and balanced or to supplement the school library holdings with books from the public libraries, the suggested professional references and children's literature titles probably would not be accessible to the teachers. Actually, it is usually the faculties of the latter kinds of school that elect to teach literature with a textbook program rather than through the use of individual trade books.

Extensive content and pedagogical knowledge is required for the teacher to use this curriculum effectively. Because of the organizational deficiencies of the series, the teacher would need to select some combination of the usual frameworks for teaching literature (previously identified in this paper) and then choose selections which fit the framework(s) chosen. For example, if the teacher wants to teach fantasy as a genre of literature, it would then be necessary to select those selections which represent fantasy as it is generally defined in such scholarly professional publications as The Green and Burning Tree (Cameron, 1969) or Children's Literature in the Elementary School (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987). The same would be true if the teacher were providing instruction on any of the other genres of literature. If the teacher chose a thematic approach, such as teaching children about stories with a survival theme, then a similar procedure would be necessary. Pedagogical knowledge would also be necessary for strategies related to spiralling of content, dealing with children's misconceptions, and higher order thinking applications of content beyond the suggestions provided in the teaching plans. A literature program needs to be profusely supplemented with trade books in order to provide children with adequate experiences with individual books and to accomplish the other goals which are both implicit and explicit in this curriculum. Thus,

teachers need to continue to read children's literature long after having studied undergraduate and graduate courses in children's literature. They should read scholarly professional articles and books detailing recent research findings about children's responses to literature, and about the current trends and issues pertaining to the teaching and learning of literature, especially the teaching and learning of critical/aesthetic response to literature by children. For many teachers this is an overwhelming expectation. In light of the fact that specialists in every content area (science, math, social studies, etc.) make this same claim, this requirement will continue to challenge classroom teachers interested in effectively teaching students in the elementary grades to respond critically/aesthetically to literature.

Summary and Conclusion

This has been a report of the findings from a study in which commonly used elementary literature curriculum materials and assessment devices were analyzed and critiqued. The focus was on how the critical/aesthetic approach to literature was addressed in the curriculum materials, but the report also provides descriptive information about the teaching and learning of the other approaches to literature that were recommended in this literature program.

The authors of this literature program identify some of the goals which pertain to aesthetic sensitivities:

> To increase understanding of literature's relationship to human experience. (East of the Sun, p. T12)
>
> To develop an understanding of literary forms, techniques, and styles. (p. T13)
>
> To develop an awareness of the relationship between literature and other subject areas. (p. T13)
>
> To demonstrate the unique artistry of individual authors and illustrators. (p. T13)

> To gain an appreciation for the literary heritage that is a legacy from one generation to another. (p. T13)

All too often, these goals are addressed primarily in the context of comprehension. The stages of aesthetic response in regard to each of these ideas which one might expect at any given grade level are consistently and unduly minimal. For example, even at Grade 5, the aesthetic responses elicited from the students usually are limited to intuitive delight and freewheeling associative response to subject matter. Although considerable effort might be made to alert the students to the responses and varying points of view of their peers, these diverse responses mean little or nothing in terms of determining the quality of that selection. If the literary selection offered the students a pleasant experience or they liked it (the two usually together), they are led to believe that this means they are justified in judging it a quality piece of literature. Liking it is equated with quality. This kind of response reflects, at best, the first stage of aesthetic response (Parsons, 1989). Although considerable effort is sometimes made in the teaching plans to alert the students to the responses and varying points of view of their age mates, these diverse responses seldom actually pertain to the quality of the aesthetic elements of the literary selection.

The authors of this program recommend numerous questions and activities which one might use to introduce or motivate interest in the selections, to guide the students' interpretations while they are reading the selections, or to follow the reading of them. All too often these questions, topics for discussion, and the skills-oriented activities tend to typify what Silvey (1989) described as "verbosity and inanity" and result in "basalizing literature" (p. 549).

Usually one objective, and occasionally two objectives pertaining to some aspect of literature are designated for each selection. Literature objectives are not identified in connection with any of the factual articles, however. To help the teacher teach to these objectives, there may be a definition of the literary term (i.e., folk tale, foreshadowing, fantasy, alliteration); occasionally a question and/or an activity pertaining to that literary understanding may be included at the end of the story in the students' edition of the textbook.

There are always numerous comprehension questions included in the teaching plans in the teachers' editions and at the end of the stories in the students' text. The "possible answers" to expect as well as the level of thinking that is called for in each of these questions are included in the teachers' editions. The levels of thinking considered are literal/definition, literal/details, interpretive/conclusion, interpretive/comparisons, critical/application, and critical/evaluation. Seldom is there a lesson without a list of vocabulary words (phonics or phonetics, word meanings, syllabification) that should be taught before the children may read the story independently or guided by the teacher. These words are then reconsidered by the children when completing the worksheets assigned as independent classroom work or as home activities.

Connections are made to a variety of subject disciplines and study skills (such as mathematics--using a map scale to calculate distances or in social studies--following written directions to draw a map, devising and using a map key, using a compass rose, and using an encyclopedia.) Some of these connections are logical, others are quite forced and farfetched. The authors always include a section labeled "Extending the Story" which lists some activities (designated easy, average, or challenging) that call for use of written or oral

language. Activities such as role playing, debates, group discussions, writing and acting out a television play or a movie, writing a letter, writing an editorial or news story for a newspaper, and drawing a diagram and writing directions are typical of the oral and written language activities that are suggested. This practice of integrating the language arts is quite in keeping with the current emphases that are given in the whole language-oriented reading and language arts programs.

In fairness to the authors, one would hope that they did not intend the teachers to follow through with everything that is suggested for teaching literature. But, this is not actually stated anywhere in the Introduction or in each grade level manual of the teachers' editions. It is hard to believe that any teacher would consider discussing these stories and following up the reading of them with even half of what is recommended in this series. If they did indeed follow through as recommended, children would truly respond most negatively to the reading of and the study of literature. This is not to deny the importance of questioning strategies when teaching literature, whether these questions are intended to guide discussions, to offer a focus for writing activities about critical/aesthetic responses to literature read in class or on their own, or to facilitate the extensive and functional use of discourse and other oral language activities. The important point is not to overuse them.

Teaching Aesthetic Sensitivities and Understandings

There are some goals among those identified in this literature series which allude to aesthetic sensitivities and understandings of literature or imply that these should be considered a key feature of a literature program in the elementary school:

> To increase understanding of literature's relationship to human experience.

> To gain an appreciation for the literary heritage that is a legacy from one generation to another.
>
> To develop an understanding of literary forms, techniques, and styles.
>
> To demonstrate the unique artistry of individual authors and illustrators.
>
> To develop an awareness of the relationship between literature and other subject areas. (East of the Sun, p. T12-T13)

In no instance is mention made in the Introduction in the teaching plans or in the students' text that literature is an art. The teacher is given no information (for his/her own enlightenment or to share with the students) about the aesthetic aspects of literature that one might consider when evaluating the quality of a selection. Nor is mention made of the developmental stages children tend to go through in responding critically/aesthetically to literature. That this view of literature is given short shrift in this literature program seems evident in (1) the skills and understandings identified in the scope and sequence of the content to be presented, (2) the types of questions teachers are encouraged to ask the students about the content of the literary selections, (3) the ways suggested for students to identify the literary elements of a story or poem or the characteristics of various literary genre, and (4) the kinds of assignments given.

We view this as a serious fault with the Odyssey program. If the study of literature is to be taught correctly, teachers and students must be alerted to the fact that literature is an art. It means, as Michael J. Parsons (1989) emphasized in his seminal book How We Understand Art: A Cognitive Developmental Account of Aesthetic Experience, that teachers and students must learn about aesthetic response to literature. They must learn how children and adults, too, come to understand (literature as) art. They need to recognize that there is something serious in (literary) art to be understood, especially as it

pertains to such aspects as (1) the subject (topic) depicted in the story, poem, drama, or literary biography; (2) the feelings or emotions expressed in the literary selection; (3) the language, form, and style used in the literary piece; and (4) the judgment one makes in evaluating its quality. These ideas were addressed in this program mostly in the context of comprehension without regard to the stages of aesthetic response. If the students liked the selection, this meant they were justified in judging it a quality piece of literature.

In addition, the questions asked about the literature encouraged the children to be very concerned about the subject matter of the story. The meaningfulness, the relevance, and the realism (not the believability or credibility) of the action in the stories and the characters were emphasized. There was some suggestion that one might evaluate the literary quality of the story on the kind of experience that it produces. The authors suggest that the quality of writing is determined by the extent to which the reader finds it offers an intense and interesting experience. Occasionally, in this respect, attempts were made to alert the students to the literary devices that the author used to create these responses. Yet, there was apparent hesitation about talking about specific strengths and weaknesses of an author's use of these devices or even obvious characteristics evidenced by comparing one writer with another. The important criterion remained the quality of some individually felt experience, an experience that is something inward and unique.

One of the major goals of this literature program is "to demonstrate the unique artistry of individual authors and illustrators" (East of the Sun, p. T13). Throughout the textbooks in this series, there are brief profiles of the authors and illustrators whose works are studied. These profiles are intended to "provide insight into the authors' lives and work, enhance reading

experiences, and to motive students to read more of their favorite author's work" (East of the Sun, p. T6). To a certain extent the information presented in these profiles might contribute to the realization of this major goal. Seldom is any reference made in them about the specific literary qualities or characteristics of the authors' writing that warranted including a profile of them. In contrast, the realization of this major goal might well be advanced if the questions and activities had encouraged the students to compare specific strengths and weaknesses or the obvious characteristics evidenced by one writer in comparison with another or in several works by the same writer. Children in the elementary school, especially by Grades 4 and 5, can do this quite well.

The "Related Reading" section for each story or poem contains a list of literary selections that might be used to extend the lesson. But, in no instance, do the authors indicate how the readers might use these additional selections. The lists are not annotated and no indication is made in any other way about what specific literary concepts or aesthetic aspects might be extended by reading these "related" books; no mention is made if these selections are comparable in theme, genre, tone, or style. The teachers would have to have read the books to know how to make the best use of them to extend specific concepts. Once again, it seems that the authors have not used to advantage some of the fine features they included in their program.

Among the major goals listed in the Introduction of the teachers' edition are two that have the potential to direct the students' attention to the quality of literary excellence:

> To gain an appreciation for the literary heritage that is a legacy from one generation to another.
>
> To develop an understanding of literary forms, techniques, and styles. (Sebesta & Simons, 1986, p. T13)

In connection with these two major goals, the authors included a number of lessons on the characteristics of specific literary genres such as folk tales, fantasy, and mystery stories and on literary devices such as foreshadowing, personification, and alliteration. No mention is made that a particular kind of genre or even a piece of writing which proved popular, or was established as a classic because critics over several generations acknowledged it as being of significant exemplary quality, was a social rather than an individual achievement. There was no acknowledgment any place in this literary program that the establishment of the characteristics for specific literary genres or the bases for declaring a piece of writing distinctive exists within a particular cultural tradition. Or that a tradition in literature is established over many years. Minuscule attention is given in this literature program to the fact that aspects of a selection's form and style can be pointed to in an intersubjective way, that all of these aspects of a work have some bearing on its worth and significance, and that it is these characteristics established by tradition that one must consider when evaluating the quality of a literary selection.

The authors of this program have selected some excellent literary selections. Although the selections include a number of established classics in English-speaking countries, some named for major literary awards, others retelling folk tales that originated among diverse cultures in countries from all over the world, seldom (except in the case of the folk tales) is this kind of information shared with the students. In one case, students were told the work was an award winner when the objective was to explain the popularity of a literary work (Lewis's The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe), not to identify it as a classic or to highlight specific qualities that evidenced literary excellence. The authors reinforce the assumption that popularity should be equated with literary excellence.

Opportunities to use oral and written language help one to think through one's responses to literature. Therefore, if children are to learn to think critically about the aesthetic aspects of literature, they need many opportunities to express these responses through activities that call for use of oral and written language. As often as possible children should share these responses with their peers and the teacher so the social aspects of language can be used to advantage. Responding to literature is a truly individual and, at times, a personal phenomenon. Thus, there are times when children should not be asked to share their responses. Recording their responses in their reader-response journals for their own private reading may be quite sufficient to reap the benefits that written language may provide in terms of opportunities that might clarify and facilitate their aesthetic sensitivities and understandings of literature.

If children are to think critically about the aesthetic aspects of literature, they need help in focusing on some key questions of their reading, and they need specific learning experiences that will give them practice in thinking about literature in this manner. In this program, most of the questions the children are asked to respond to in their discussions or through the activities bring little or no experience, knowledge, or understanding to responding critically/aesthetically to the literature studied. Seldom do the questions or activities focus on key ideas nor do they direct the readers' attention to the critical/aesthetic aspects of the literature.

Unfortunately, the teachers who use the bibliography of "Professional Resources for Teachers" in the Introduction will not realize the many potential benefits a bibliography of this kind would ordinarily offer them. None of the professional publications included in it pertain to response to or study of the aesthetic aspects of literature. Furthermore, although this program was

published in 1986, none of the eight references listed was published later than 1981. All except one of these publications were available in revised and updated editions before the 1986 copyright date, so the material should have been included in this bibliography. One disconcerting implication of this bibliography is that it strongly suggests to the teachers who use this literature program that no new knowledge about the teaching and learning of literature exists, whereas in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s some of the most important statements on the theory, research, and practice pertaining to the study of literature were published.

Assessing Students' Learning

The authors stated that the ultimate success of this literature program is based on whether or not the literary selections included in the textbooks enhanced the students' enjoyment of literature and that this is an affective outcome that no written test can assess. But, in the areas reflected in their statement of major goals and the specific literature objectives stated in each lesson, the authors of the program do not waive the need for some kind of evaluation or assessment of children's progress in learning about literature. Nor do they suggest that the instructional strategies recommended to the teachers or the activities recommended for students are of little consequence. In the Introduction, the authors make it quite clear that they thought that testing and evaluation should be deemed an ongoing process that is a part of each day's activities. They stressed that, in the main, children's progress in learning about literature should be assessed by accurate observations and monitoring conducted consistently and continually in the full context of reading and responding to literature. They encouraged the teachers to save whatever papers

the students wrote in connection with their guided literature lessons, as well as any anecdotal records of their observations.

More specifically, the teachers are encouraged to assess students' progress by analyzing the brief anecdotal records of the students' informal responses to questions pertaining to their opinions about the literature they studied, their spontaneous comments about their expressions of interest in reading and literature, and whether or not the students sought out further literary experiences based on their observation. Throughout the program the teachers are encouraged to assess the students' knowledge of literary elements and techniques used in the literary selections they studied, as well as their growth in literary appreciation by examining the students' work required or recommended in the pupils' and teachers' editions. The evaluation worksheets, which supposedly offered objective tests for each kind of major prose, could be used to determine the students' knowledge and understanding of literature appreciation skills, in addition to reading skills.

Students' knowledge and understanding would be assessed by considering their answers to the questions which call for various kinds of thinking. The authors of this literature program continue to view critical thinking about literature as basically subjective. If they had been better informed about the nature of response to literature and about the nature of critical thinking (critical reading), they would have acknowledged that the diversity in judgments about literature is due to the affective aspects of response, not to the critical thinking about literature.

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APPENDIX

Framing Questions

Phase II Study 2: Curriculum Materials Analysis
Framing Questions

A. GOALS

1. Are selective, clear, specific goals stated in terms of student outcomes? Are any important goals omitted? As a set, are the goals appropriate to students' learning needs?

2. Do goals include fostering conceptual understanding and higher order applications of content?

3. To what extent does attainment of knowledge goals imply learning networks of knowledge structured around key ideas in addition to the learning of facts, concepts, and principles or generalizations?

4. What are the relationships between and among conceptual (propositional), procedural, and conditional knowledge goals?

5. To what extent do the knowledge goals address the strategic and metacognitive aspects of processing the knowledge for meaning, organizing it for remembering, and accessing it for application?

6. What attitude and dispositional goals are included?

7. Are cooperative learning goals part of the curriculum?

8. Do the stated goals clearly drive the curriculum (content, activities, assignments, evaluation)? Or does it appear that the goals are just lists of attractive features being claimed for the curriculum or post facto rationalizations for decisions made on some other basis?

B. CONTENT SELECTION

1. Given the goals of the curriculum, is the selection of the content coherent and appropriate? Is there coherence across units and grade levels? (Note: all questions in this section should be answered with the goals in mind.)

2. What is communicated about the nature of the discipline from which the school subject originated?

   a. How does content selection represent the substance and nature of the discipline?

   b. Is content selection faithful to the discipline from which the content is drawn?

   c. What does the relationship among conceptual (propositional), conditional, and procedural knowledge communicate about the nature of the discipline?

3. To what extent were life applications used as a criterion for content selection and treatment? For example, in social studies, is learning how the world works and how it got to be that way emphasized?

4. What prior student knowledge is assumed? Are assumptions justified? Where appropriate, does the content selection address likely student misconceptions?

5. Does content selection reflect consideration for student interests, attitudes, dispositions to learn?

6. Are there any provisions for student diversity (culture, gender, race, ethnicity)?

C. CONTENT ORGANIZATION AND SEQUENCING

1. Given the goals of the curriculum, is the organization of the content coherent and appropriate? Is there coherence across units and grade levels? (Note: All questions in this section should be answered with goals kept in mind.)

2. To what extent is the content organized in networks of information structured in ways to explicate key ideas, major themes, principles, generalizations?

3. What is communicated about the nature of the discipline from which the school subject originates?

   a. How does content organization represent the substance and nature of the discipline?

   b. Is content organization faithful to the discipline from which the content is drawn?

   c. What does the relationship among conceptual (propositional), conditional, and procedural knowledge communicate about the nature of the discipline?

4. How is content sequenced, and what is the rationale for sequencing? For example, is a linear or hierarchical sequence imposed on the content so that students move from isolated and lower level aspects toward more integrated and higher level aspects? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen sequencing compared to other choices that might have been made?

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5. If the content is spiralled, are strands treated in sufficient depth, and in a non repetitious manner?

D. CONTENT EXPLICATION IN THE TEXT

1. Is topic treatment appropriate?

   a. Is content presentation clear?

   b. If content is simplified for young students, does it retain validity?

   c. How successfully is the content explicated in relation to students' prior knowledge, experience, and interest? Are assumptions accurate?

   d. When appropriate, is there an emphasis on surfacing, challenging, and correcting student misconceptions?

2. Is the content treated with sufficient depth to promote conceptual understanding of key ideas?

3. Is the text structured around key ideas?

   a. Is there alignment between themes/key ideas used to introduce the material, the content and organization of the main body of material, and the points focused on in summaries and review questions at the end?

   b. Are text structuring devices and formatting used to call attention to key ideas?

   c. Where relevant, are links between sections and units made explicit to students?

4. Are effective representations (e.g., examples, analogies, diagrams, pictures, overheads, photos, maps) used to help students relate content to current knowledge and experience?

   a. When appropriate, are concepts represented in multiple ways?

   b. Are representations likely to hold student interest or stimulate interest in the content?

   c. Are representations likely to foster higher level thinking about the content?

   d. Do representations provide for individual differences?

5. When pictures, diagrams, photos, etc. are used, are they likely to promote understanding of key ideas, or have they been inserted for other

reasons? Are they clear and helpful, or likely to be misleading or difficult to interpret?

6. Are adjunct questions inserted before, during, or after the text? Are they designed to promote: memorizing; recognition of key ideas; higher order thinking; diverse responses to materials; raising more questions; application?

7. When skills are included (e.g., map skills), are they used to extend understanding of the content or just added on? To what extent is skills instruction embedded within holistic application opportunities rather than isolated as practice of individual skills?

8. To what extent are skills taught as strategies, with emphasis not only on the skill itself but on developing relevant conditional knowledge (when and why the skill would be used) and on the metacognitive aspects of its strategic application?

E. TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS AND CLASSROOM DISCOURSE

1. What forms of teacher-student and student-student discourse are called for in the recommended activities, and by whom are they to be initiated? To what extent does the recommended discourse focus on a small number of topics, wide participation by many students, questions calling for higher order processing of the content?

2. What are the purposes of the recommended forms of discourse?

   a. To what extent is clarification and justification of ideas, critical and creative thinking, reflective thinking, or problem solving promoted through discourse?

   b. To what extent do students get opportunities to explore/explain new concepts and defend their thinking during classroom discourse? What is the nature of those opportunities?

3. Who or what stands out as the authority for knowing? Is the text to be taken as the authoritative and complete curriculum or as a starting place or outline for which the discourse is intended to elaborate and extend it? Are student explanations/ideas and everyday examples elicited?

4. Do recommended activities include opportunities for students to interact with each other (not just the teacher) in discussions, debates, cooperative learning activities, etc.?

F. ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. As a set, do the activities and assignments provide students with a variety of activities and opportunities for exploring and communicating their understanding of the content?

   a. Is there an appropriate mixture of forms and cognitive, affective, and/or aesthetic levels of activities?

   b. To what extent do they call for students to integrate ideas or engage in critical and creative thinking, problem solving, inquiry, decision making, or higher order applications vs. recall of facts & definitions or busy work?

2. As a set, do the activities and assignments amount to a sensible program of appropriately scaffolded progress toward stated goals?

3. What are examples of particularly good activities and assignments, and what makes them good (relevant to accomplishment of major goals, student interest, foster higher level thinking, feasibility and cost effectiveness, likeliness to promote integration and life application of key ideas, etc.)?

   a. Are certain activities or assignments missing that would have added substantially to the value of the unit?

   b. Are certain activities or assignments sound in conception but flawed in design (e.g., vagueness or confusing instruction, invalid assumptions about students' prior knowledge, infeasibility, etc.)?

   c. Are certain activities or assignments fundamentally unsound in conception (e.g., lack relevance, pointless busy work)?

4. To what extent are assignments and activities linked to understanding and application of the content being taught?

   a. Are these linkages to be made explicit to the students to encourage them to engage in the activities strategically (i.e., with metacognitive awareness of goals and strategies)? Are they framed with teacher or student questions that will promote development?

   b. Where appropriate, do they elicit, challenge, and correct misconceptions?

   c. Do students have adequate knowledge and skill to complete the activities and assignments?

5. When activities or assignments involve integration with other subject areas, what advantages and disadvantages does such integration entail?

6. To what extent do activities and assignments call for students to write beyond the level of a single phrase or sentence? To what extent do the chosen forms engage students in higher order thinking?

G. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

1. Do the recommended evaluation procedures constitute an ongoing attempt to determine what students are coming to know and to provide for diagnosis and remediation?

2. What do evaluation items suggest constitute mastery? To what extent do evaluation items call for application vs. recall?

   a. To what extent are multiple approaches used to assess genuine understanding?

   b. Are there attempts to assess accomplishment of attitudinal or dispositional goals?

   c. Are there attempts to assess metacognitive goals?

   d. Where relevant, is conceptual change assessed?

   e. Are students encouraged to engage in assessment of their own understanding/skill?

3. What are some particularly good assessment items, and what makes them good?

4. What are some flaws that limit the usefulness of certain assessment items (e.g., more than one answer is correct; extended production form, but still asking for factual recall, etc.).

H. DIRECTIONS TO THE TEACHER

1. Do suggestions to the teacher flow from a coherent and manageable model of teaching and learning the subject matter? If so, to what extent does the model foster higher order thinking?

2. To what extent does the curriculum come with adequate rationale, scope and sequence chart, introductory section that provide clear and sufficiently detailed information about what the program is designed to accomplish and how it has been designed to do so?

3. Does the combination of student text, advice and resources in teachers manual, and additional materials constitute a total package sufficient

to enable teachers to implement a reasonably good program? If not, what else is needed?

a. Do the materials provide the teacher with specific information about students' prior knowledge (or ways to determine prior knowledge) and likely responses to instruction, questions, activities, and assignments? Does the teachers manual provide guidance about ways to elaborate or follow up on text material to develop understanding?

b. To what extent does the teachers manual give guidance concerning kinds of sustained teacher student discourse surrounding assignments and activities?

c. What guidance is given to teachers regarding how to structure activities and scaffold student progress during assignment completion, and how to provide feedback following completion?

d. What kind of guidance is given to the teacher about grading or giving credit to participating in classroom discourse, work on assignments, performance on tests, or other evaluation techniques?

e. Are suggested materials accessible to the teacher?

4. What content and pedagogical knowledge is required for the teacher to use this curriculum effectively?

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